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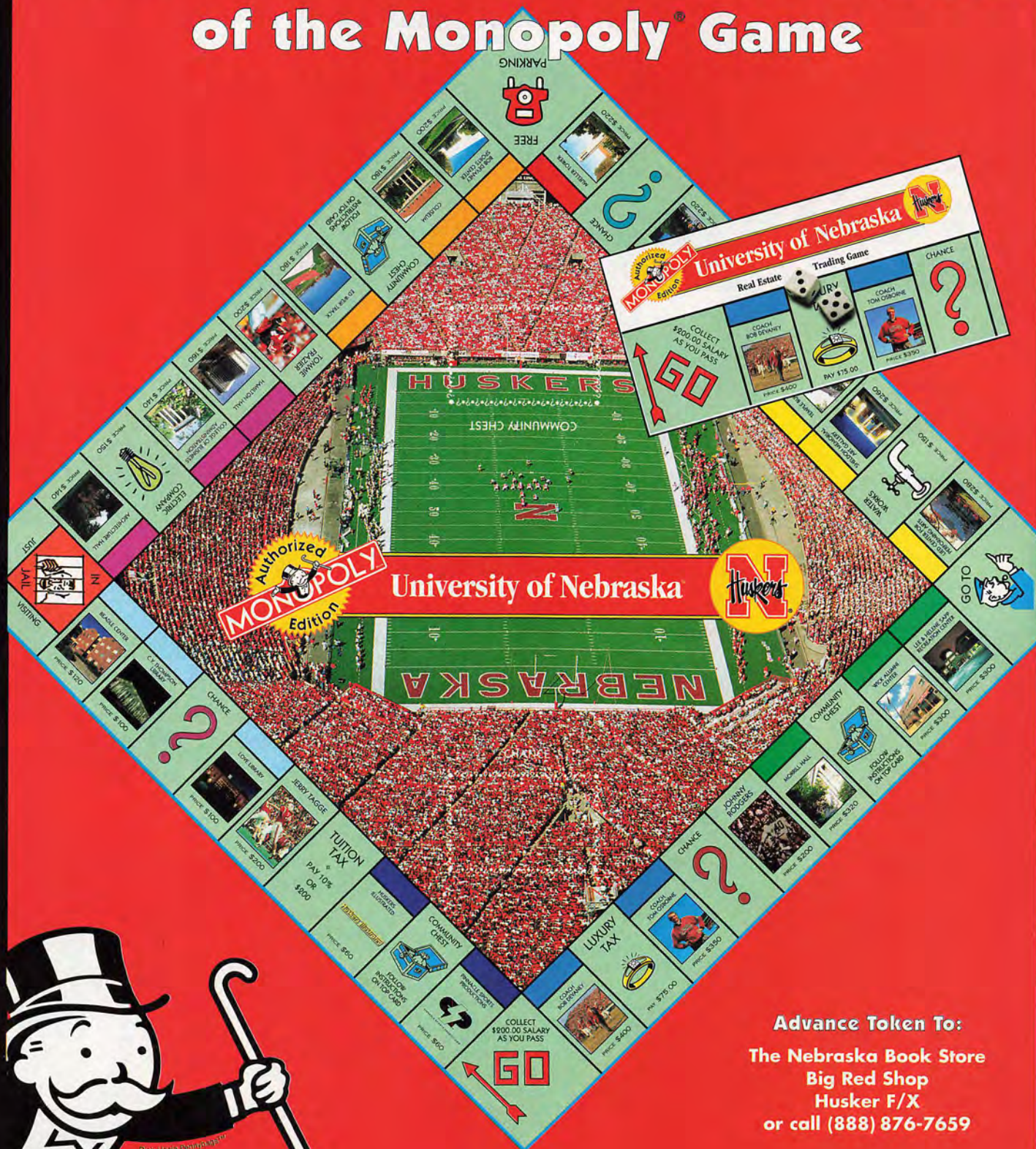
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CONTENTS

JUNE/JULY 1998 • Volume 18, No. 6

FEATURES

14 Heavy Mettle

Frank Solich will unfairly feel immense pressure to add to Nebraska's winning ways in '98. But Tom Osborne's hand-picked successor is up for the task.

By Mike Babcock

24 Position Breakdowns

BIG 12 PREVIEW 84

1998 Schedule	91	Texas A&M	106
Big 12 Breakdown	94	Oklahoma State	108
Kansas State	96	Oklahoma	110
Colorado	98	Texas	112
Missouri	100	Texas Tech	114
Kansas	102	Baylor	116
Iowa State	104		



QUARTERBACK

24



I-BACK/
FULLBACK

28



TIGHT END

32



SPLIT END/
WINGBACK

36



OFFENSIVE
LINE

40



DEFENSIVE
TACKLE

44



RUSH END

48



LINEBACKER

50



SECONDARY

54



SPECIAL
TEAMS

56

60 The King Of Pain

Behind defensive coordinator Charlie McBride and his 4-3 attack, Nebraska is hurting teams with something other than offense.

By Mike Babcock

65 1998 Player Bios

NEXT ISSUE

We'll be taking the next couple of months off as *Huskers Illustrated* gears up for the 1998 football season. Look for the August issue (Vol. 18, No. 7) to arrive in mailboxes around Sept. 1.

ON THE COVER

Matt Davison photographed by Doug DeVoe

HIONLINE

(www.sportscom.com/huskers)

DEPARTMENTS

Letters	4
NU Notebook	6
Huskers in Washington D.C. • Subscribers' All-OSborne Team and memories • Around The Horn	
State Of The Huskers	10
In what was supposed to be a night of celebration, many left Memorial Stadium feeling more heartbreak than jubilation.	
Off The Set	12
Only in Nebraska do more than 60,000 die-hards show up for a spring scrimmage.	
From The Beat	13
For the most dominant college football team of the '90s, the NFL draft has often been a frustrating, and at times, unexplainable experience.	
National News	82
Huskers Illustrated's preseason Top 20 • New rules that affect Division I-A college football.	
Scouting NU's Nonconference	118
Louisiana Tech, Alabama-Birmingham, Cal and Washington serve as this season's Big 12 tune-up games.	
All Sports	122
Final Word	127
Forget all the season-ending television shows that grabbed America by the throat in May; it was a quarterback race that had Nebraska tuned in.	



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please send your comments and questions to Letters, P.O. Box 83222, Lincoln, Neb. 68501-3222. Or fax them to us at (972) 851-1720. We reserve the right to edit the letters for clarity, content and length. For those with electronic mail abilities, huskersedit@sportscom.com.

Like all Husker hoops fans, I was disappointed when Tyronn Lue chose to enter the NBA draft after his junior season at Nebraska (Early Exit, May 1998). He helped put the excitement back into Husker basketball, and I know that whichever team drafts him will get the same results.

From all of us Husker fans to you, Tyronn: Best of luck, and thanks for the memories.

Tami Huffine
Omaha, Neb.

I always knew what a class act Tom Osborne was as a coach, but after reading Mike Babcock's column (Osborne Content To View From A Distance, May 1998), I realized what a special person Osborne truly is.

When he walked away from the head coaching position and turned the job over to Frank Solich, he turned over more than his headset and clipboard. He gave Solich the freedom to run the Husker football program his own way. He also refused to be a distraction, instead resorting to watching spring practice from the stands.

Ty Hardy
Newport News, Va.

Mike Babcock's wonderful feature on Mike Rucker (Wrestling With Stardom, May 1998) showed what being a football player at Nebraska is all about.

Rucker is a perfect example of a player who has waited his turn while learning from players like Jared Tomich and Grant Wistrom.

Martin Moore
Kansas City, Mo.



I just wanted to thank *Huskers Illustrated* for the excellent coverage you gave the Nebraska softball team in the last issue (Melody Maker, May 1998).

With football, basketball and baseball getting most of the attention, softball often goes unnoticed by most sports fans at the major college level. In my opinion, there is nothing more exciting than softball.

In addition to being one of the nation's top college softball players, Ali Viola is a true role model. Thanks for your continued softball coverage, and keep up the good work.

Lorraine Noble
Omaha, Neb.

As much as I like Frankie London's skills, I was extremely happy when it was announced that Bobby Newcombe would be the Huskers' starting quarterback. Newcombe is one of those players who could break a big play every time he carries the ball. I think he has the potential to be even better than Tommie Frazier.

By installing Newcombe as the starter, Frank Solich went with his instincts. Whether or not Newcombe works out, Solich is to be commended.

Darren Holliday
Memphis, Tenn.

Maybe Frankie London can do your next television commercial and talk about cover jinxes like Warrick Dunn of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers did for ESPN, *The Magazine*. *Huskers Illustrated* is no *Cat Fancy*, but the results were the same.

Robert Cardwell
New York, N.Y.

POSTAGE NOTICE

Huskers Illustrated is now offering first-class postage through football season for only \$10.45. Please call 1-800-397-3715 to order with a credit card or send your check to the following address: *Huskers Illustrated* Attn: First-Class Mailing P.O. Box 83222 Lincoln, Neb. 68501

Here is hoping that we get to see more covers this fall with DeAngelo Evans. Not that I get into his looks or anything, but it means that he is healthy and contributing to the success of the football team.

Chandler Harris
Biloxi, Miss.

VOLUME 18, NUMBER 6

Huskers Illustrated

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Huskers Illustrated (ISSN 0279-3474) is published monthly January through May and December, bi-monthly Jun/Jul.; weekly September through November except open dates. Single issue cost \$2.95; subscription rate for one year (17 issues) is \$49.90. First Class postage is available for an additional charge of \$16.00 per year. Foreign postage \$34.00.

Huskers Illustrated is published by College Sports Communications, Inc., 13645 Beta Road, Dallas, Texas 75244-5039, (972) 742-2000 or (800) 397-3715. Periodicals paid at Dallas, Texas.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Huskers Illustrated*, P.O. Box 83222, Lincoln, Neb. 68501.

Address all editorial related correspondence to *Huskers Illustrated*, P.O. Box 83222, Lincoln, Nebraska 68501.

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For Subscription Inquiries call 1-800-397-3715 or mail to P.O. Box 83222, Lincoln, Nebraska 68501-3222. Allow six to eight weeks for response. Give old and new addresses and enclose latest mailing address label when writing about your subscription.



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Customer Service
1-800-397-3715

Monday - Friday: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
(Central Time)

E-Mail Addresses
Publisher: huskersp@sportscom.com
Editor: huskersedit@sportscom.com
Circulation: huskerscirc@sportscom.com

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Nebraska sports information

Hail To The CHAMPS

President Clinton Offers Solution To Co-National Championship Debate

Josh Heskew wanted to preserve the moment with a photograph. The problem was, he needed someone to take the picture so that he could be in it. Fortunately, teammate **Jay Foreman** was nearby.

Heskew handed over the camera, cautioning: "Make sure the flash is on."

Time was of the essence. The opportunity was once-in-a-lifetime.

"I got me like this with the Prez," Heskew said, resting his arm on an imaginary shoulder.

The "Prez," no disrespect intended, was **President Bill Clinton**, who met with the Nebraska and Michigan national championship football teams at the White House in early April.

"I talked to him," said Heskew, the Cornhuskers' senior center. "He turned around, and it was like: 'Hey, how you doing?' After we got done taking our picture, he asked my name."

"I told him, and he said, 'It was nice to meet you. Congratulations on your national championship.' I'm pretty sure it was the same run-through he gave everybody else. But it makes you feel good inside that he kind of talked to you, acknowledged you. It's just cool anytime you get to meet him."

The ceremony was held in the East Room of the White House. The Michigan contingent met with the president first, following by the Nebraska party of 140 players, coaches and staff.

Clinton, who was presented with a No. 97 red jersey with his name on the back and a football autographed by the Cornhuskers, said he was the only person who could bring the co-national champions together and suggested they settle the issue on the south lawn of the White House.

The game could be called the Rose Garden Bowl, he said.

"Boy, he was swarmed by all of us," Heskew said. "Everybody who shook his hand, I think, took a picture. You know how he feels inside because it happens to us here, like on Photo Day, it's the same way. You've got a bunch of little kids running around, asking for your autograph or a picture."

The Cornhuskers arrived in Washington, D.C., early in the morning and did some sightseeing before meeting with the president. Heskew recorded most of what he saw with

his camera.

"But you know what? I forgot to take my camera inside Arlington Cemetery," he said. "I also forgot to take it inside the Capitol. And I still went through two rolls of film. That's kind of funny."

Senior weakside linebacker **Eric Johnson** also enjoyed the trip. Meeting Clinton "was cool," he said. But, he added, it wasn't quite as cool as having played for coach **Tom Osborne**.

"I mean, not to disrespect the President of the United States, but when you talk to Coach Osborne and you talk to the president . . . it's like Coach Osborne has this aura about him," said Johnson.

"You can't even explain it. When Coach Osborne walks into the room, you just feel it."

Still, Johnson was impressed, though maybe not as much as Heskew.

"He's just as tall as I am," Heskew said. "He's about 6-foot-2. He's bigger than what I thought he was. I thought he was a little shorter than that. But he's a pretty good-sized guy."

"It's kind of funny when you're looking at the president and you see all of us getting around him and saying, 'Can I get a picture? Can I get a picture?' You know how he feels."

A month later as Heskew was sitting in the bleachers in the southeast corner of Memorial Stadium during spring ball, a lady approached with her young daughter and asked if he would mind her taking a picture. He obliged, and then before he left, he signed an autograph for a small boy who had waited patiently nearby.

Just like the Huskers had done in Washington D.C. ■



Courtesy of the St. Louis Rams

Six Huskers Taken In NFL Draft

Six former Cornhuskers were selected in the NFL draft in late April, including rush end **Grant Wistrom**, the Lombardi Award winner, and defensive tackle **Jason Peter**. Both of whom were taken in the first round.

Wistrom was the sixth choice, by the St. Louis Rams. His signing with the Rams was a homecoming of sorts. He is from Webb City, Mo. Peter was the 14th choice, by the Carolina Panthers.

"Being the No. 6 pick is a great honor," Wistrom told the *Lincoln Journal Star*.

Quarterback **Scott Frost** was drafted as a defensive back in the third round by the New York Jets, and I-back **Ahman Green** was taken in the third round by the Seattle Seahawks.

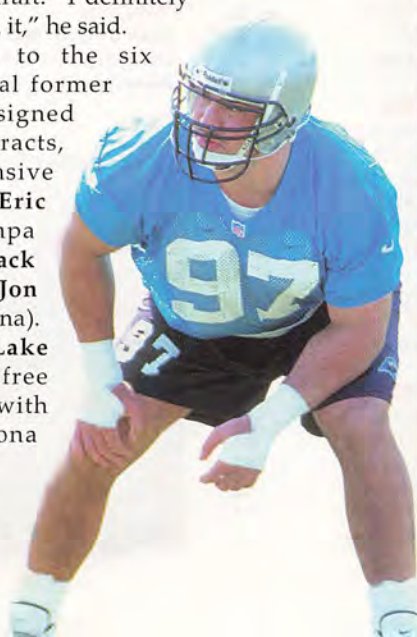
Offensive guard **Aaron Taylor** and safety **Eric Warfield** were drafted on the second day, in the seventh and final round, Taylor by the Indianapolis Colts and Warfield by the Kansas City Chiefs.

Taylor, the Outland Trophy winner, was understandably disappointed at being the 190th player selected in the draft. "I definitely don't understand it," he said.

In addition to the six draftees, several former

Cornhuskers signed free agent contracts, including offensive linemen **Eric Anderson** (Tampa Bay), **Fred Pollack** (St. Louis) and **Jon Zatechka** (Arizona). Split end **Jeff Lake** also signed a free agent contract with the Arizona Cardinals. ■

Jason Peter



AROUND THE HORN

HARD LUCK CONTINUES

Senior quarterback **Monte Christo** went into spring practice sharing the No. 2 spot on the depth chart with **Bobby Newcombe**. During the first week, however, he suffered torn ligaments in his right thumb. Christo suffered a similar injury to the thumb early in his freshman season.

He underwent surgery both times, as well as undergoing surgery on his back in the winter of 1995 and surgery on a knee in the fall of 1995. He was sidelined midway through spring practice in 1997 after suffering a concussion, only to return in the fall and suffer a back injury.

As a result of all of the injuries, Christo has played in only 12 games during his four seasons. "You have to feel sad for Monte, especially with the position being open this spring," Nebraska quarterbacks coach **Turner Gill** said.

Christo came to Nebraska from Kearney, Neb., as a walk-on.



Monte Christo

THEY SAID IT

• Senior rush end **Chad Kelsay** distinguished himself in the classroom as well as on the field last season, earning first-team Academic All-Big 12 honors and being named to the GTE/CoSIDA Academic All-District VII team and the GTE/CoSIDA Academic All-America second team.

After being named Cornhusker Lifter of the Year in the spring, Kelsay was asked if that meant more than the academic honors. "Well, I mean, I wouldn't tell that to my mom," he said.

• Although Newcombe and the other quarterback candidates didn't throw the ball particularly well during the spring, defensive coordinator **Charlie McBride** wasn't concerned. "This is as good of throwing quarterbacks as I've seen here in a long time," he said. "We've got some kids who can throw. That helps us (the defense). The better the quarterbacks, the better we're going to be in our coverage."

• Newcombe isn't a big as his predecessor, **Scott Frost**. But he'll be expected to run just as aggressively, which means going into contact instead of running out of bounds.

"We'll expect our quarterback to get the most out of every play," said coach **Frank Solich**. "Our quarterbacks have pretty good ability running, and what might seem like the right thing to do for some guys, to get out of bounds, they might still make a big play off of that."

Solich also doesn't want his quarterbacks to slide at the ends of plays. "Once we start one guy sliding, you'll have more guys wanting to slide," he said. "They're in the wrong sport for that."

• Sophomore I-back **Dan Alexander** appears to be completely healed from the knee injury he suffered in the spring game a year ago. Even so, he thought teammates might have been hesitant to hit him low during the spring. Cornerback **Ralph Brown**, for example, couldn't stop him on one play.

"He's a nice guy," Alexander said. "He wasn't going after me low. He tried to come upper body. That was good for me. But he probably could have made the tackle lower if he had wanted to."

The 250-pound Alexander said Cornhusker defenders aren't intimidated by his size. "I don't think they're scared of me because I don't think our defense is scared of anyone," he said.

• Some players are hesitant to attend a school at which an older brother has been successful. But that wasn't the case for redshirted freshman free safety **Dion Booker**, whose brother, **Michael**, was a Cornhusker cornerback and the Atlanta Falcon's first-round draft pick in 1997.

"I wasn't going to say: 'I'm not going to go to Nebraska because of my brother,'" Dion said. "Other schools were saying: 'Oh, you know, your brother did his thing there. It's time for you to do yours. Don't follow in his footsteps.' My brother was one of the best defensive backs in college."

"Following in his footsteps would be great. His being here already wasn't a bad thing about going to Nebraska. I thought it was a positive thing. Basically the reason I came here was because of him." ■

ALL OSBORNE TEAM RESULTS

In the April issue of *Huskers Illustrated* we asked for our subscribers' help in putting together an All-Osborne team. We even dangled a chance for 10 lucky Husker fans to win an autographed copy of last summer's *Osborne: A Silver Celebration* book. The response was incredible. Via e-mail, fax and the post office, we received nearly 100 entries listing first-team selections, most unforgettable game and best Osborne memory. The only criteria for inclusion on the team was that the player had to be a member on any of Osborne's teams starting with 1973. Despite that fact, Heisman Trophy winner Johnny Rodgers still received 15 votes as a wingback/receiver.

To clear up some confusion, we have combined certain positions for various reasons. For example, Dave Rimington received votes at all three offensive line spots and Trev Alberts made every defense position except safety (to protect the guilty party we won't disclose who listed him as a corner). Defensive end was also a problem due to the inclusion of rush end. When Broderick Thomas lined up in the 3-4 he was considered at outside linebacker. With Alberts and the 4-3, the position changed to rush end. Before either, the position was called defensive end. Either way the ends were not lumped in with the linebacking positions. Understand?

QUARTERBACK

Tommie Frazier (1992-95)	45
Scott Frost (1996-97)	9
Turner Gill (1981-83)	5

I-BACK

Mike Rozier (1981-83)	46
Lawrence Phillips (1993-95)	4
Roger Craig (1980-82)	3
Ahman Green (1995-97)	3
Richard Berns (1976-78)	1
I.M. Hipp (1977-79)	1
Jeff Smith (1982-84)	1

FULLBACK

Tom Rathman (1983-85)	42
Joel Makovicka (1995-present)	8
Andra Franklin (1977-80)	5
Cory Schlesinger (1992-94)	2
Tony Davis (1973-75)	1
Omar Soto (1990-91)	1

WINGBACK/RECEIVER

Irving Fryar (1981-83)	52
Tim Smith (1977-79)	19
Jon Bostick (1989-91)	6
Bobby Newcombe (1997-present)	3
Frosty Anderson (1971-73)	2
Matt Davison (1997-present)	2
Tyrone Hughes (1989-92)	2
Abdul Muhammad (1991-94)	2
Rod Smith (1985-87)	2
Reggie Baul (1993-95)	1
Todd Brown (1979-82)	1
Corey Dixon (1991-93)	1
Morgan Gregory (1987-89)	1
Brendan Holbein (1993-96)	1
Clester Johnson (1993-95)	1
Bobby Thomas (1974-76)	1
Jon Vedral (1994-96)	1
Shevin Wiggins (1996-present)	1

TIGHT END

Junior Miller (1977-79)	39
Johnny Mitchell (1990-91)	14
Jamie Williams (1979-82)	4
Todd Frain (1983-85)	1
Mitch Krenk (1981-82)	1
Mike Vedral (1990-92)	1

OFFENSIVE LINE

Zach Wiegert (1991-94)	55
Dave Rimington (1979-82)	49
Dean Steinkuhler (1981-83)	40
Aaron Taylor (1994-97)	38
Will Shields (1989-91)	37
Brenden Stai (1991-94)	12
Eric Anderson (1994-1997)	10
Kelvin Clark (1976-78)	9
Aaron Graham (1992-95)	8
Chris Dishman (1993-96)	7
Rob Zatechka (1991-94)	7
Marvin Crenshaw (1972-74)	3
Rik Bonness (1973-75)	2
Harry Grimmering (1982-84)	1
Dan Hurley (1979-81)	1
Andy Keeler (1986-88)	1
John McCormick (1985-87)	1
Randy Schleusener (1978-80)	1
Bob Sledge (1986-88)	1
Joel Wilks (1992-94)	1
Jake Young (1986-89)	1
Jon Zatechka (1994-97)	1

PLACE-KICKER

Kris Brown (1995-present)	49
Byron Bennett (1990-93)	3
Dale Klein (1984-86)	2
Kevin Seibel (1979-82)	2

DEFENSIVE END

Grant Wistrom (1994-97)	55
Trev Alberts (1990-93)	54
Broderick Thomas (1985-88)	39
Mike Croel (1987-90)	18
Jared Tomich (1994-96)	10
Jimmy Williams (1979-81)	8
George Andrews (1976-78)	4
Donta Jones (1991-94)	2
Travis Hill (1989-92)	1
Derrie Nelson (1978-80)	1

DEFENSIVE TACKLE

Jason Peter (1994-97)	47
Neil Smith (1985-87)	31
Christian Peter (1993-95)	13
Danny Noonan (1984-86)	12
John Dutton (1971-73)	11
Terry Connealy (1991-94)	3

Rich Glover (1970-72)	3
Jim Skow (1983-85)	3
John Parrella (1990-92)	2
Kenny Walker (1989-90)	1

LINEBACKER

Marc Munford (1984-86)	19
Ed Stewart (1991-94)	14
Terrell Farley (1995-96)	13
Steve Damkroger (1979-82)	7
Jamel Williams (1994-96)	6
Lee Kunz (1976-78)	5
Jay Foreman (1995-present)	4
Mike Knox (1981-83, 85)	4
Phil Ellis (1992-95)	3
Troy Dumas (1991-94)	2
LeRoy Etienne (1985-88)	2
Tom Ruud (1972-74)	2
Pat Tyrance (1988-90)	2
Danny Noonan (1984-86)	1
Mike Petko (1989-91)	1
Clete Pillen (1974-76)	1

DEFENSIVE BACKS

Mike Minter (1993-96)	31
Tyrone Williams (1993-95)	30
Barron Miles (1992-94)	26
Michael Booker (1994-96)	24
Bret Clark (1982-84)	21
Brian Washington (1984-87)	14
Tony Veland (1992, 94-95)	13
Ralph Brown (1996-present)	11
Toby Wright (1992-93)	11
Brian Davis (1985-86)	8
Tyrone Legette (1989-91)	5
Bruce Pickens (1988-90)	5
Reggie Cooper (1987-90)	4
Wonder Monds (1973-75)	4
Eric Stokes (1993-96)	4
Tyrone Byrd (1989-92)	3
Dave Butterfield (1974-76)	2
Tyrone Hughes (1989-92)	2
Andy Means (1978-80)	2
Eric Warfield (1995-1997)	2
Mark Blazek (1986-88)	1
Mike Brown (1996-present)	1
Dan Casterline (1983, 85-86)	1
Charles Fryar (1986-88)	1
Russell Gary (1978-80)	1
Jim Pillen (1976-78)	1

PUNTER

Mike Stigge (1989-92)	25
Darin Erstad (1994)	18
Jesse Kosch (1995-96)	15

OSBORNE BOOK WINNERS

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Monte Voss Denver, Colo.	Jim Haberman Arlington, Texas
Tim Norling Orlando, Fla.	Merlin Butler Brentwood, Tenn.

"Tom being carried off the field after the '95 Orange Bowl."

M. Stevens
Tempe, Ariz.

"Going for two points and the win in the 1984 Orange Bowl."

Scott Probst
Stafford, Texas

"Winning the national championship in Miami in the 1995 Orange Bowl. I do not expect to have such a feeling of euphoria again in my whole life. Tom Osborne had been so close, so many times. Watching him being carried off the field on the shoulders of his team was one of the greatest things I have ever seen in my life."

Rich Watson
Holdrege, Neb.

"Sticking by Lawrence Phillips instead of listening to media criticism."

Grady Birt
Burbank, Calif.

"It's not a personal memory, but a second-hand one. The football coach at my high school once told me a story about an encounter he had with Dr. Osborne while attending a football camp at Nebraska. He needed to use a telephone and ran into Osborne while searching for it. He asked Osborne if a phone was nearby and if he could use it. Osborne took a couple of minutes to walk with him to a coach's office, tell him how to dial it, and asked him if there was anything else that he could do."

"It should be pointed out that my high school is a small school in Iowa that has had two winning seasons in 20 years and never produced a Division I player, so Osborne clearly wasn't kissing up. It's just the type of small thing he does for people that he will soon forget, but they will remember for a lifetime."

Joe Grandis
Cedar Falls, Iowa

"Doing what he thought was right for his players, despite the criticism he incurred."

Jim Haberman
Arlington, Texas

OSBORNE MEMORIES

"His composure after missing the two-point conversion against Miami in the 1984 Orange Bowl. That was so typical of Tom."

Carl Dabelstein
cdabelst@czn.com

"When he talked about Brook Berringer after his death. Also, the manner in which he handled himself while winning."

Carmen Guarill
Lakewood, Colo.

"When I was a student at UNL and hurt my knee during an NROTC trip, Coach Osborne got me in to see the team trainer and orthopedic surgeon."

Carrie Hagemann
hskermidic@aol.com

"The smile on his face as he hugged Jason Peter after getting doused with Gatorade after the 1998 Orange Bowl victory against Tennessee."

D.J. Golightly
Johnston, Iowa

"He turned down pay raises for himself and requested the money be paid to his assistants."

Chester T. Hodges
Houston, Texas

"Tom Osborne didn't relish the glare of the media, so surely his best moments were far from the klieg lights and press conferences. I will always remember one

of those very public times, however. When the lights were the hottest and the pressure the greatest, he stood his ground and shouldered public disapproval to deflect the pressure from young college students who were not equipped to handle it alone. Specifically, I'm referring to the controversies of '95, especially the saga around Lawrence Phillips. In a time when it seemed the whole nation condemned him, Osborne's determination to do what he believed to be right remained unbowed by public sentiment."

David Reimer
Cleveland Heights, Ohio

"His strong leadership during all 25 years."

Anna Mallett
mallett@comweb.net

"How he didn't try to rationalize what had gone on after the game that Nebraska lost to Arizona State. He just admitted that Arizona State played harder, saying, 'They just whipped us.'"

Kyle Clark
kcgrizz@aol.com

UNFORGETTABLE GAMES

"The 1997 game in Missouri will be a game to remember, with the ball deflecting off of Shevin Wiggins, and Matt Davison diving to catch the ball. 'The Catch' will live in the history books as part of one of the greatest games in Husker football. It not only helped the Huskers preserve an undefeated season, but also gave them a share of the national title."

J. Patrick Workman
Watertown, S.D.

"The 1983 Kickoff Classic when Nebraska beat up on Penn State, 44-6, for sweet revenge for the blown call the year before in Happy Valley."

Scott Brant
hskrl@webtv.com

"While the '97 Missouri game and the '95 Orange Bowl certainly warrant serious consideration, I would have to say the '78 Oklahoma game ranks as Coach Osborne's most unforgettable game. This game will not only be remembered as Dr. Osborne's first win against Barry Switzer and Oklahoma (the Sooners were undefeated and ranked No. 1 at the time), but also for the drama and intensity that led up to NU's 17-14 victory, which spoiled OU's chances of a national championship."

Ken Bray
Saugus, Calif.

"Tom's first national title. I was in Miami and had to sit with all of those obnoxious Miami fans. I was so happy for Tom and all of the men who had worked so hard to finally get the 'can't win the big one' reputation off our backs."

Brian J. Thomas
stogielover@prodigy.net

"The 1996 Fiesta Bowl, without question. It was the biggest blowout between a No. 1 and a No. 2 team in recent college football history. The most memorable moment was when No. 15 Tommie Frazier was apparently stopped by almost the entire Gator defense and then broke free en route to a 75-yard touchdown."

Jeramie Abel
jnkitt@get.net

"The Burger King commercial where Coach Osborne sings, 'Dear Old Nebraska U.'"

Jeramie Abel
jnkitt@get.net



It's So Hard To Say Goodbye

In what was supposed to be a night of celebration, many left Memorial Stadium feeling more heartbreak than jubilation

Neil Smith and Lawrence Pete were among the 43,197 at Memorial Stadium for the dedication of Tom Osborne Field on the Friday night before Nebraska's Red-White spring game.

Smith played defensive tackle for Osborne, earning letters from 1985 to 1987. He has played 10 seasons in the NFL, the last with the Super Bowl champion Denver Broncos. Pete, a Cornhusker letterman at middle guard from 1986 to 1988, played six seasons in the NFL, all with the Detroit Lions.

Smith and Pete stood on the field, just inside the fence along the east sideline.

Smith, in particular, drew autograph requests, which he respectfully declined. It wouldn't be appropriate, he said. The night belonged to Osborne and the 1997 Nebraska team.

The next day during the spring game, Smith willingly signed autographs.

"All my good luck is due to him," Smith said of Osborne, as players and coaches filed across the podium to receive their 1997 national championship rings. Three crystal football trophies, representing the ESPN/USA Today coaches' national championship, stood in front of the podium.

Smith and Pete were among numerous former players who returned to honor Osborne. There was no way he would have missed the weekend, Smith said. "He put his heart into his work for all those years, and there isn't one of us who played for him who doesn't owe him their heart in return."

The people whose lives Osborne has touched "are too many to count," Smith said, adding that Osborne's influence on his players could be seen "not just in school, but also in life."

Osborne's retirement after 25 years as head coach is "a happy-sad type of thing," a similarly reflective Pete said. "I vacillate in my thinking on this. It hasn't set in.

"He may be physically removed, but he's still in the hearts and minds of players."



Mike Babcock

Pete, a scholarship recruit from Wichita, Kan., in 1984, "gravitated" to Osborne fairly quickly. "Being from a fatherless home, you automatically gravitate to a male," he said.

Smith, also a member of the 1984 recruiting class, needed more time than Pete to feel comfortable around Osborne.

"It took me a couple of years, at least," he said with a laugh.

onship in the last four seasons, the university rededicated Memorial Stadium.

Mostly, however, the evening was filled with the unavoidable melancholy that accompanies change.

Osborne shed a tear or two and, no doubt, fought back many others.

"The relationships are what count," he told the audience. "The rings, the championships, the victories, the awards are all fine. But the friends, the people I've come to know, I'll remember all of you."

As the soon-to-be Hall of Fame coach finished — the three-year wait-

Doug DeVoe



It is only fitting that the field at Memorial Stadium now bears the name of the man who left a piece of his heart behind after stepping aside following 25 memorable years.

"I was scared of him in some ways. He was like the principal or something. I haven't seen much about the guy that's changed."

The truth in Smith's words was expressed in another way by Joel Makovicka, who spoke on behalf of the current players. "Knowing Coach Osborne the way we do, we know he'd like to step aside quietly. But when the greatest coach in college football steps aside, it's anything but quiet," he said.

In addition to naming the field in honor of Osborne and celebrating the Cornhuskers' third national champi-

ing period for Hall of Fame induction was waived for Osborne — the crowd stood and applauded.

As there had been after Osborne's 250th coaching victory over Oklahoma, there were fireworks for the celebration's finale. They exploded with such force that you had to wonder a little if the west stadium, where the fireworks were positioned and set off, might not come crashing down.

But the west stands were still in place for the Red-White game the next afternoon.

Before the unveiling of "Tom Osborne Field" in red letters along the southeast sideline, Chancellor James Moeser said, referring to Osborne: "We pay tribute to a great builder of men."

Smith and Pete were among those men, who number in the thousands. ■

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Where The Fans Are Truly Fanatic

Only in Nebraska do more than 60,000 die-hards show up for a spring scrimmage

It's a pretty good bet that some time in the next couple of months someone will do one of those "by the numbers" columns. You know, when the writer lists a fact that corresponds with a particular numeral.

For example: 3 — the number of national championships won by Nebraska during the Tom Osborne era. Or: 220 — the number of consecutive sellouts at Nebraska's Memorial Stadium.

With that in mind, I think 60,498 would be a pretty significant entry. That was the announced attendance for Nebraska's 1998 spring game. It goes without saying that that is a record, and it also goes without saying, "Wow, are you kidding me? That's incredible. There is no place like Nebraska." Etc., etc.

When I, and most other observers, heard that more than 60,000 people were in Memorial Stadium to watch the Whites defeat the Reds, 24-21, let me tell you, there was a lot of head-scratching.

What was remarkable was not that the figure wasn't accurate, but the fact that it was true. Had a crowd half that size been announced, that would have been impressive. But 60,498? What a terrible day to run a golf course.

The weather, despite a little wind, was ideal. One of the better days of the spring, in fact. The sun was out, and instead of heading for the links or the lake, Husker fans headed to Memorial Stadium.

Where else but in Nebraska could such a sight be seen? That's a rhetori-

cal question, but let me answer it anyway. Nowhere. Even in football-crazy states such as Tennessee and Alabama, or at a powerhouse such as Florida State, it's doubtful that you would witness and hear such a scene.

Michigan, that other national champion in 1998, played host to a modest 30,000 at its spring game. The Blues defeated the Whites, 20-17, in case you missed the score in Ann Arbor.

Granted, in the fall, the atmosphere at those schools ranks with the

nation's best. But we're talking about a glorified scrimmage, four-and-a-half months from the kickoff of the 1998 season. It was incredible, and there really is no explanation other than Nebraskans love Husker football.

It showed during the final weekend of April.

On the Friday night before the spring game, Memorial Stadium played host to a celebration honoring the 1997 national championship team and outgoing head coach Tom Osborne.

The atmosphere had a family reunion feel to it. It's just that more than 40,000 brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins of the Nebraska football family showed up.

Where else but in Big Red Country could such a sight be found? Again: nowhere.

Among those in attendance were members from each of Osborne's 25 teams. Every letterman coached by Osborne was invited to attend the weekend's festivities and many did. For a Husker fan, it had to have been

like going to one of those fantasy camps. Neil Smith was there roaming the east sideline, with reporters and former teammates in tow.

But Smith wasn't the star of the show. He was merely a member of the supporting cast. Though Osborne downplayed it and shared the accolades with his staff, players and family, there was no question as to who the night belonged to. The fans, the fireworks, the video productions, the kind words and applause all celebrated the championship season. But the underlying theme was "Thanks, Coach."

The emotions were genuine, and suffice it to say, it was a pretty special night. It was also symbolic, as if the changing of the guard finally took place Friday night, while the Nebraska football family officially said good-bye to Tom Osborne and then helped usher in the Frank Solich era on Saturday.

There's no question that it has been a remarkable transition from one head coach to the other, partly because of the man who built the program into the nation's best and partly because of the man in whose hands it now belongs. During the celebration, Solich was once again the epitome of class. He has been that way since his promotion was announced on Dec. 10, dutifully smiling with a full understanding of the legacy he follows, not wanting to take away from it.

Having played for Bob Devaney and coached under Osborne, Solich brings unique qualifications to his role as Nebraska's head coach, and Big Red fans know it. As the Red-White game unfolded, Solich was back on the sidelines, pacing and play-calling. Sure it was only spring. But the Huskers were finally his.

And 60,498 family members were with him every step of the way. ■



Bill Doleman



Doug DeVoe

A record crowd was on hand to watch Frank Solich "officially" take over the Huskers.

Bill Doleman's face is familiar to Cornhusker fans. He is host for several Nebraska-related television programs including the "Husker Show" and coaches' shows for Terry Pettit, Paul Sanderford and Frank Solich.

Who Said The NFL Made Sense?

For the most dominant college football team of the '90s, the NFL draft has often been a frustrating, and at times, unexplainable experience

If national championships carried over to draft day, Nebraska would be stocked with more future NFL players than any other college football program in the country.

The reality is that that's not the case, which in a roundabout way is a giant compliment to the NU coaching staff.

Six Cornhuskers were taken in the April NFL draft — a respectable number, but perhaps on the low end considering the senior-led 1997 team demolished most of its opposition on the way to a third national title in four seasons.

It's especially underwhelming if you consider Washington, which was dominated by Nebraska and lost to three other teams, produced 10 NFL picks. Even Tennessee, which struggled to be competitive with the Cornhuskers in the Orange Bowl, had eight players selected.

What those numbers suggest is that Nebraska apparently has better depth, but not as many players who will make a quick impact in the NFL.

With free agency becoming a popular way for teams to try and go from also-ran to contender status, the best-available-athlete or project player in a draft is more apt to slide in favor of someone who can fill an immediate specific need.

"You look for early ability to play," Bengals player personnel director Pete Brown told *Sports Illustrated*. "To develop a player for someone else is self-defeating."

Since the 1990 season, Nebraska has had 51 players taken in the NFL draft. But six of those were taken after the seventh round, so if the seven-round format that currently exists had been in effect, the Cornhuskers would be averaging under six players per draft.

Remember, we're talking about the most dominant college program of the '90s.

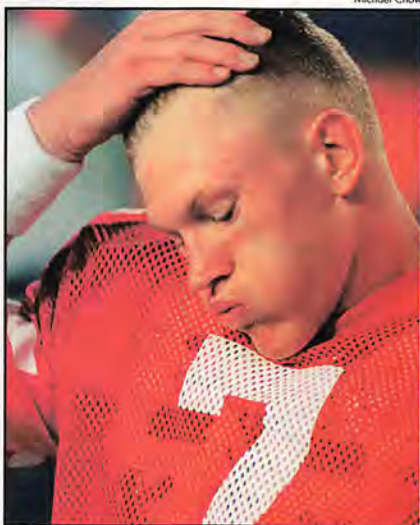
As Trev Alberts put it in a guest

column he wrote for the *Lincoln Journal Star* April 19, "This weekend will be one of the greatest moments and the biggest disappointments those guys in the draft will ever have. There are 30 teams to draft. More than 150 players think they'll go in the first round. A lot of it is because agents are only human. They tell you that you're great."

In 1994, Alberts' agent was saying similar things of his client because that's the feedback he



Curt McKeever



A third-round pick of the New York Jets, former quarterback Scott Frost will have to make a living playing safety.

was getting from all the NFL player personnel directors. Based on what he'd heard, Alberts figured he'd go somewhere between the 10th to 15th pick, so on draft day he paid little attention to the television while the first few selections were being made. After position swapping by the St. Louis Rams, Alberts was headed to the Indianapolis Colts after being taken with the No. 5 selection.

Of course, the moral of that story is that NFL hopefuls should be seated when they answer the phone on draft day. The silver lining to Alberts' situa-

tion was that he got chosen higher than expected and thus was able to garner a better contract.

The case of Aaron Taylor, however, is far different.

Taylor is the only player in Nebraska history to be named an All-America at more than one position. He was even voted the 1997 Outland Trophy recipient as the nation's top interior lineman. Before this year's draft, the 6-foot-1, 305-pounder said he felt having played guard and center would be looked on as a plus. It wasn't.

Taylor, who figured he'd go somewhere from the second to fourth round, was chosen by Indianapolis as the first pick of the seventh. His height, or lack thereof, was apparently an overriding issue (as, no doubt, was the fact that Nebraska offensive linemen are short on experience pass protecting). Of the 33 offensive linemen taken before him, 27 were at least 6-4, and none was shorter than 6-2.

At least Taylor will get a chance to prove his point. For many others who starred for Nebraska — and at other elite programs across the nation — the story ends without a shot at the NFL.

I-back Ahman Green, who decided to forego his senior season and enter the draft had to wait until nearly the end of the first day of the draft before Seattle took him in the third round as the 76th overall pick.

"I'm just glad someone picked me up," Green said. "Even with the fast times I ran, I expected this. Now, I just want to get on the field and prove myself again."

For most college stars, that's how the NFL works. It's only the select few who have the luxury of letting their collegiate credentials merit can't-miss status on draft day. ■

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter, covering the University of Nebraska for the *Lincoln Journal Star*. In addition to reporting on football he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.

Can Frank Solich lead Nebraska to a sixth national title in his first season as a collegiate head coach — a task only accomplished once in NCAA history?

Heavy Mettle

NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

Frank Solich Will Unfairly Feel Immense Press



But Tom Osborne's Hand-Picked Successor Is Up For The Task

ure To Add To Nebraska's Winning Ways In '98.

Doug DeVoe

By Mike Babcock

Tom Osborne wasn't making a prediction. Rather, he was stating a fact.

"Athletics has dips; it has peaks and valleys," he said during the news conference in December to announce he was stepping aside after 25 seasons as Nebraska's head coach.

"If I were here next year, it might be 8-3. It might be . . . I don't know what it might be. So I just hope people understand whatever these guys accomplish, I couldn't have done any better."

"These guys" was a reference to Frank Solich and his staff.

What Osborne meant was, fans should measure Solich's first season as head coach by something other than wins and losses — which will be difficult given Nebraska's recent success.

Since The Associated Press established its national rankings in 1936, only one other major college football program has earned three national championships in four seasons.

generally positive and gratifying," he said in March. "I haven't had anybody come up and throw a pie in my face or take a swing at me. There were a few years when that might have happened."

Though he laughed when he said it, there was an element of truth in his words.

His first few seasons as head coach were difficult. His first team in 1973 had an identical record to Bob Devaney's final team in 1972. Both were 9-2-1. And both lost against Oklahoma.

Yet some fans claimed the program had fallen off, pointing out that the Cornhuskers had been less imagina-

***Following Tom Osborne
would be burden enough.
But Frank Solich also
must shoulder the
weight of history.***

Notre Dame won national titles under coach Frank Leahy in 1946, 1947 and 1949.

The Cornhuskers' record over Osborne's final four seasons was 49-2.

Over the final five seasons, it was 60-3. If Nebraska were to lose three games in 1998, there would be those who complain: "It took Tom five seasons to lose that many."

Holding Solich to the standard set by Osborne would be unreasonable, not to mention unfair. Nevertheless, that's human nature. And that's the kind of pressure Solich will face.

Osborne knows what it means to follow a legend. The response from fans since his retirement has "been

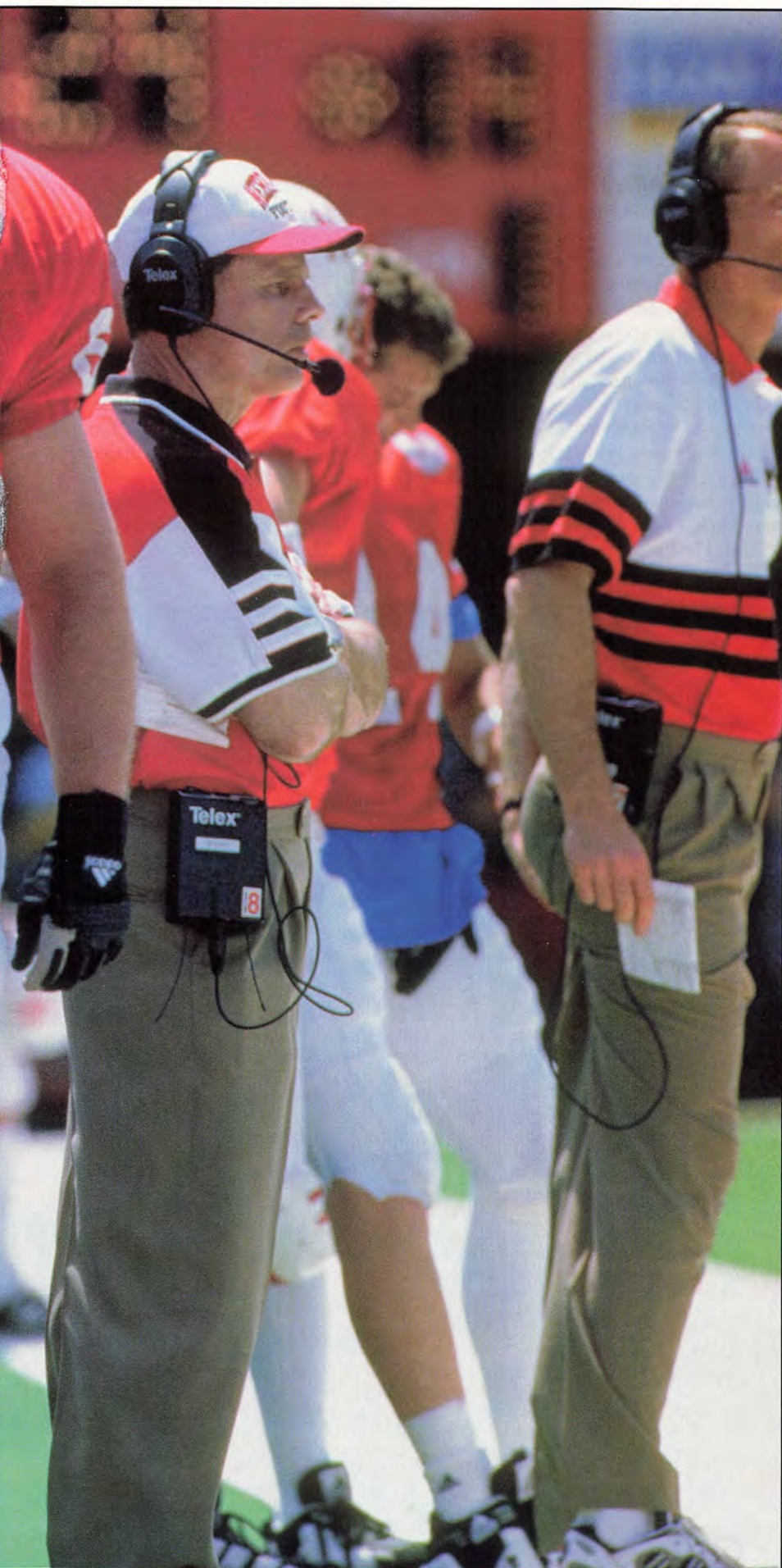
tive on offense in 1973, while ignoring the fact that Heisman Trophy winner Johnny Rodgers, one of the greatest offensive players in Nebraska history, had completed his eligibility.

Osborne was Devaney's offensive coordinator. The offensive philosophy stayed the same.

The same will be true of the Cornhuskers' first season under Solich. The coach is new, but the offensive philosophy is not. "Certainly, we're going to be a heavy option football team again," Solich said prior to spring practice. "We've looked at different formations to run the option out of."

"We're pretty much multiple in that regard. We're looking at a set or two





that might be able to utilize the quarterback a little bit more as a runner. But for the average fan sitting in the stands it may not be all that noticeable. We're looking at a few offensive plays that we've seen other teams run, that we think will fit in very well to our scheme of things and will probably be something the quarterback will be able to audible to in certain situations to help us out. So there is no major overhaul.

"There will be some fine things here and there that maybe we'll change. But we'll see how it all goes. Some things look very good on the board. They look very good when other teams are running those plays, but when you install them, sometimes they don't look quite as good."

In any case, despite his extraordinary record (255-49-3), Osborne endured some difficult times, which, for the most part, have been forgotten in the heady success of the last five seasons.

Following Osborne would be burdensome enough. But Solich also must shoulder the weight of history. First-year NCAA Division I-A football head coaches, on the average, don't even produce winning records, much less the kind of records to which Cornhusker fans have become accustomed.

And only one major college football coach has ever directed a team to a national championship in his first season. Bennie Oosterbaan, a Michigan All-American, returned as head coach in 1948 and led the Wolverines to a 9-0-0 record and the AP national championship.

Michigan wouldn't win another national title until last season.

Dennis Erickson directed Miami to the national championship in 1989, his first season as the Hurricanes' head coach. But he had been coaching at the collegiate level since 1982.

Barry Switzer and Paul Brown coached teams to national championships in their second seasons at schools, Switzer at Oklahoma in 1974 and the legendary Brown at Ohio State in 1942.

Only three major college football coaches have ever won as many as 11 games in their first season — Gary Blackney, John Robinson, and Bill Battle. All three coached teams to 11-1 records, Blackney at Bowling Green in 1991, Robinson at USC in 1976 and Battle at Tennessee in 1970.

Switzer and Dick Crum are among

11 coaches to win 10 games their first season at the major college level. Switzer was 10-0-1 in 1973. Crum was 10-0-1 at Miami of Ohio in 1974.

The task Solich faces is made more difficult by the fact he will have a young, inexperienced quarterback and a rebuilt offensive line, which has only one returning starter.

Either of those situations would be cause for concern. And the offensive line suffered a blow in the spring game when tackles Adam Julch and Jeff Clausen suffered injuries that will hamper their summer conditioning. Julch tore ligaments in his right ankle. Clausen broke his left hand.

The injury to Julch, who finished the spring at No. 1 on the left side, is the more serious of the two "because it's going to be two months before he's able to run," said Solich.

"When you talk about linemen, you talk about hoping that regardless of

how good they are, how experienced they are, that they would have a summer of being able to go through agility work, be able to hit the weight room hard and make sure they're coming in in great condition, not too heavy.

"When you're trying to come off an injury over the summer, all those things are very difficult. So when he does get to the point where he's able to move and run well, he'll have to really work hard at getting himself into playing shape. How soon he'll be able to do that, I don't know."

Redshirted freshmen Dave Volk and Kyle Kollmorgen are behind Julch on the depth chart.

Clausen, who shares the No. 1 job on the right side with Jason Schwab, will be able to work on his agility during the summer, though he'll be hampered in his weight lifting for a time.

Josh Heskew, the returning starter at center and a candidate for postsea-

son honors, was held out of spring practice after undergoing back surgery following the Orange Bowl game victory.

Ben Gessford and James Sherman held the No. 1 guard positions in the spring.

Bobby Newcombe moved to the top of the depth chart at quarterback during the spring in spirited, and much-publicized, competition involving, primarily, Frankie London and Eric Crouch.

London then opted to switch positions, leaving Crouch as the top back-up.

All three graded well, according to quarterbacks coach Turner Gill. From the beginning of the spring to the end, London graded the best of the three, in fact. But other factors favored Newcombe, who demonstrated his big-play ability as a wingback in his first collegiate season.

With a prime-time performance in the Red-White Game, sophomore sensation Newcombe won the highly contested quarterback job

Everybody Loves BOBBY

Bobby Newcombe is the people's choice. About that there can be no doubt.

The cheers the freshman from Albuquerque, N.M., drew from the crowd of 43,197 when he crossed the podium to receive his national championship ring at the celebration on the night before the Red-White intrasquad scrimmage would have pushed the needle on an applause meter to the limit.

Matt Davison, whose dramatic reception on the final play in regulation at Missouri that kept the national title hopes alive, was among the few who drew applause comparable to Newcombe's.

One season into his Cornhusker career, Newcombe has captured the fans' fancy.

Who should succeed **Scott Frost** at quarterback? A majority of fans would say Newcombe. And they would point to his performance in the spring game as irrefutable evidence.

Newcombe stole the show in a 24-21 White team victory that attracted a record crowd of 60,498 on a sunny afternoon whipped by winds that blew from opposite directions at one point.

He led the White team in rushing, with 116 yards on six carries.

And he led the Red team in rushing, with 59 yards on seven carries.

Newcombe ran 91 yards for a touchdown on the White

team's first play from scrimmage. He followed that with a 43-yard touchdown pass to **Casey Vanderhoef** five minutes later.

And he led the Red team to its first touchdown, after the score was 21-0, directing an eight-play, 52-yard drive capped by **Correll Buckhalter**'s 24-yard run late in the first half. "There's no question Bobby's speed really showed at times," said coach **Frank Solich**. "He did a good job of execution."

The 91-yard run from scrimmage was a spring game record.

Todd Uhlir ran 89 yards in the 1995 game.

Newcombe wasn't the whole show on offense, however. **Frankie London** also played quarterback for both teams, carrying 17 times for 68 yards and the White team's third touchdown.

And though his statistics weren't as impressive as those of the other two, **Eric Crouch** showed he had come a long way in the spring. All three made good decisions, said quarterbacks coach **Turner Gill**, "especially Crouch in the sense that he's only been running it about four weeks.

"He didn't do anything last year running our offense. I'm really pleased."

Solich was pleased with the return of I-back **DeAngelo Evans**, who missed all of last season with a pelvic injury. Evans carried only twice for 5 yards before taking the remainder of the afternoon off because of an ankle sprain. "It was just a mild sprain," Evans told reporters later.

"There wasn't any reason to go back out there. I made it through spring ball. This is kind of a small setback, nothing serious. The biggest deal is that I've been able to practice.

"The coaches know that I'm back health-wise."

Nebraska didn't come through the spring game unscathed, however.

Offensive tackles **Adam Julch** and **Jeff Clausen** both suffered injuries that have created doubt about their availability early in the season.

The other injuries were minor. London suffered a hip-pointer. Middle linebacker **Carlos Polk** injured a foot and defensive tackle **Luis Almanzar** aggravated an ankle problem.

"I'm not going to use any of our former players as a standard, but I think he'll be a great quarterback for us," Solich said of the soft-spoken sophomore from Albuquerque, N.M.

"The fact that he's played there (quarterback) very little and has operated as well as he has, I think, is tremendous. There's no question in my mind that he will continue to improve, and already I think he's a very good quarterback. He's a much better thrower than I think most people would believe.

"When you think, sometimes, of our quarterbacks, you think of them as running quarterbacks, guys who maybe can't throw the way dropback guys can throw. But he's got a great arm, a very strong arm. I think his timing, his accuracy is very good. He doesn't have a traditional throwing motion. But that's OK."

When Newcombe is inclined to

throw, he'll have experienced receivers, with four of the top five from a year ago returning: split ends Kenny Cheatham and Matt Davison and wingbacks Lance Brown and Shevin Wiggins. In addition, John Gibson has come back from a severe knee injury.

Sheldon Jackson returns at tight end, after being in the regular rotation last season, with T.J. DeBates and Tracey Wistrom, Grant's little brother, emerging as the top backups in the spring. Wistrom is among several red-shirted freshmen who have established themselves on the three-deeps.

That indicates "some younger players have really stepped up and played well," said Solich.

The Cornhuskers should be solid, if not exceptional, at running back with the return of fullback Joel Makovicka and the return to apparent good health of I-back DeAngelo Evans.

Makovicka, who regularly draws comparisons to former Cornhusker fullback Tom Rathman, rushed for 685 yards and nine touchdowns and caught five passes for 60 yards and one touchdown last season. The former walkon from tiny Brainard, Neb., carried 105 times and never lost a yard.

By the end of spring, Evans, who missed all of last season with a pelvic injury, was showing the moves that enabled him to rush for 776 yards and 14 touchdowns as a true freshman in 1996.

He finished the spring sharing the top spot on the depth chart with sophomores Correll Buckhalter and Dan Alexander, who, at 6-foot and 250 pounds, adds another dimension to the offense.

If Evans has regained his freshman form, and remains healthy, Buckhalter and Alexander might be relegated to

The Cornhuskers already were woefully thin at defensive tackle. Starters **Jason Wiltz** and **Steve Warren** both were held out of the spring game because of injuries, leaving sophomore-to-be **Loran Kaiser** and junior walkon **Bobby Gill** to handle the job with the White team's No. 1 defense.

Kaiser was the game's leading tackler with 10, including one for a 3-yard loss. He also forced a fumble, one of five between the two teams. The White team lost both of its fumbles.

Throughout the spring, "we have not taken good care of the ball," said Solich. "That scares you a little. But on the other side of it, we're playing a lot of people and there's not a normal rotation."

Even without the top two tackles, the No. 1 defense played well, as it had all spring.

"I think that's typical. You're going to find that, probably, at almost every school. The defense is going to be ahead of the offense," Solich said. "The defense is going to know the line calls, have a lot of repetition against those plays. As you know, they see it day in and day out."

"We've got a good defensive team. You add it all up, you'll probably not move the ball very well early. So it's not a surprise to us as coaches. But we felt we had the kind of people, offensively, that we needed to start moving the ball in the spring. We did that. And I think we'll continue to get better."

The offense made marked improvement following the first major scrimmage, in which it didn't pick up a first down until the 44th play. "That was tough on all of us," said Solich.

"But yet, from that point on, the offense started to move the ball."

The quarterbacks, a combined 11-of-23 passing from 154 yards in the

spring game, never really got untracked, in part because the weather for the major scrimmages wasn't conducive to throwing. However, "I think those guys can be excellent throwers; I really believe that," Solich said.

The defense also contributed to the passing problems.

"We've got some great rush ends," said Solich.

"We have the ability to put on a lot of pressure. **Charlie (McBride)**, I think he felt in his own way he was pulling back on the blitzes throughout the spring. But I thought they were blitzing pretty good. So you're not going to have a very consistent throwing game when you take that into consideration."

The White team was credited with 10 tackles for losses totaling 38 yards, including one sack by weakside linebacker **Eric Johnson**. Middle linebacker **Jay Foreman** was second on the White team in tackles with nine. Rush end **Chad Kelsay** was involved in seven tackles.

Polk and strongside linebacker **Julius Jackson** led the Red team defense in tackles with seven each. Two of Jackson's tackles were quarterback sacks, for losses totaling 11 yards.

Rush end **Travis Toline** was credited with six tackles for the Red team.

Victories by the White team, which in recent seasons has included the No. 1 defense and No. 2 offense, have been rare. The only other win during the 1990s came in 1995, 40-34.

The victory was only the fourth by the White team in the last 20 seasons.

Despite taking a 21-0 lead early in the second quarter, the White team needed a 42-yard field goal by junior **Dan Hadenfeldt** late in the third quarter for the victory.

The punting competition in the spring game between Hadenfeldt, a walkon from Des Moines, Iowa, and senior **Bill Lafleur**, who also came to Nebraska as a walkon, was spirited.

Hadenfeldt averaged 46.7 yards on three punts. Lafleur averaged 42.3 yards on six.

Newcombe directed the Red team on an 11-play, 81-yard drive capped by fullback **Joel Makovicka's** 1-yard run midway through the third quarter to cut the deficit to 21-14. Then London took the Red team 52 yards on 11 plays for a touchdown with 2:42 remaining in the game.

I-back **Dan Alexander** scored the final touchdown on a 9-yard run.

After Solich, of course, Newcombe was the most requested for post-game interviews.

And the focus of the questioning was the issue of his becoming the No. 1 quarterback.

"I think I helped myself quite a bit," he said in answer to a question.

A delighted record crowd agreed. ■



mop-up duty, even though either might have been starting in other seasons. Evans at his best is an extraordinary talent, with potential comparable to the greatest in Cornhusker history.

Newcombe and Evans are game-breakers. The key, however, is the offensive line.

The offense was sluggish at times during the spring, and again early in the Red-White game. "There were a few plays where we weren't able to get started right away," Solich said afterward.

"But overall we were able to drive the ball on occasion and put some long drives together, and that's what we've been looking for here, coming down the stretch, to be able to sustain some drives. We're going to have the kind of people on the field who are going to make some big plays.

"We know we can make some big plays."

Depth in the interior line is the most significant concern on defense. Sophomore Loran Kaiser, who's 20 pounds heavier than last season, had a solid spring and will back up Jason Wiltz at tackle, while junior Bobby Gill finished the spring as the No. 2 nosetackle, behind Steve Warren.

Gill is a walkon from Northeast High School in Lincoln.

Defensive coordinator Charlie McBride has indicated that incoming freshmen Jeremy Slechta, Jason Lohr and Jon Clanton will get a good look in the fall. Any or all could avoid a redshirt.

Rush end remains a high-profile position, despite the departure of Lombardi Award winner Grant Wistrom. Chad Kelsay and Mike Rucker both are candidates for post-season honors, and with Kyle Vanden Bosch, Brandon Mooberry, Travis Toline and Aaron Wills, there's depth to keep them fresh.

McBride considered moving Vanden Bosch inside, but thought better of it. The 6-4, 260-pound sophomore from Larchwood, Iowa, has the quickness to be a force on the perimeter.

Five of the top six linebackers return, with senior Eric Johnson stepping up on the weakside to replace the only departed starter — Octavious McFarlin. Tony Ortiz and Brian Shaw

again will alternate at strongside linebacker, with Jay Foreman in the middle and Carlos Polk as his backup.

Oft-moved Julius Jackson seems to have found a home at weakside linebacker.

Hard-hitting Clint Finley is the only new starter in the secondary, replacing Eric Warfield at free safety. Ralph Brown, a two-year starter, and Erwin Swiney return at the corners, and steady Mike Brown, the team's leading

are among others who will compete for playing time in the fall.

A couple of the back-up jobs in the secondary weren't settled in the spring.

London also might work his way into the mix if he decides not to play wide receiver.

Kris Brown will challenge Kansas State's Martin Gramatica as the best place-kicker in the Big 12, and possibly in the nation. Bill Lafleur emerged from the spring as the No. 1 punter.

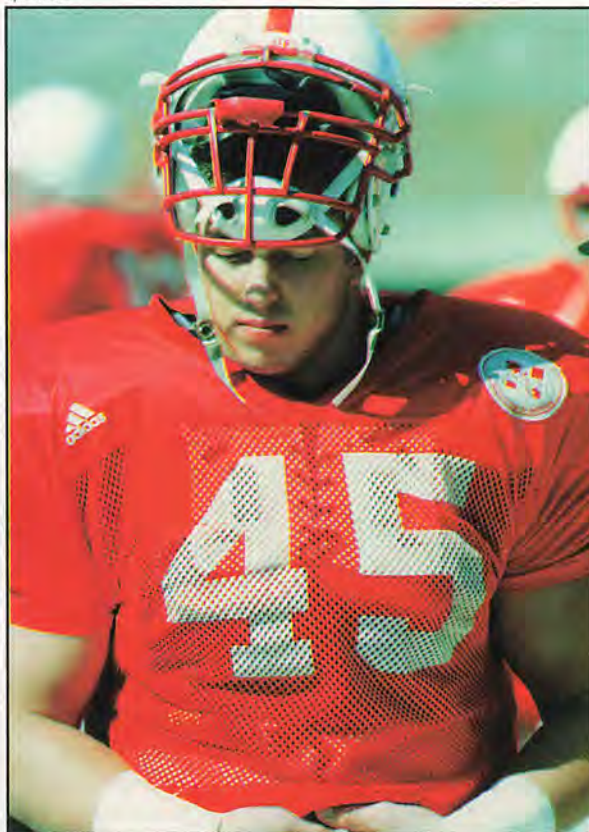
"The kicking game should be very strong for us," Solich said.

Wiggins, Walker, Cheatham, and Lance Brown were the top kick returners last season, along with Newcombe, who hopes to get an occasional opportunity even though he's a quarterback now.

"I'll still be returning some punts, every once in a while," said Newcombe, who averaged 20.3 yards on 12 returns and scored one touchdown last season. "I think they're going to give me a chance every once in a while to be back there. Coach Solich definitely said not on a regular basis, though."

Solich was satisfied with what he saw during the spring. "I was real pleased with the players," he said. "They were really team-oriented throughout spring ball."

Ryan Soderlin



The Huskers should be solid, if not exceptional, at running back with the return of fullback Joel Makovicka and a healthy I-Back in DeAngelo Evans.

tackler last season, is back at rover. Swiney missed spring practice because of the kind of pelvic-related injury that has bothered other Cornhuskers, creating some concern.

Sophomore Khari Reynolds had a good spring filling in for Swiney, however, and apparently earned a place in the rotation, along with sophomore Joe Walker, a returning regular.

Redshirted freshmen Dion Booker and Troy Watchhorn, as well as juniors Greg McGraw and Jerome Peterson,

They've all worked very hard to put things together to have a pretty good football team. I think we have a chance to be good on both sides of the ball."

The spring was a learning experience for him as well as for his players.

"I enjoyed it," he said. "I felt comfortable with it. There are a lot of things to do. It's a full-time job in the spring in terms of getting things organized and getting everything done."

"I've learned as I've gone along. Some things, play-calling down on the

side(line), was new for me. Sometimes you get so involved in what's going to happen on the next play that you forget what happened on the last play. I think I've made some progress on that end, too."

Solich served as Osborne's eyes in the pressbox on game day, just as Osborne served as Devaney's eyes up there 25 years ago. Now that responsibility will fall to Gill.

The play-calling was a bit restrained in the spring game, but not because of the change. "We held back some things that, really, I would have liked to run," said Solich. "Probably if we weren't televising the game, we would have run some more offense. And we would have run some more defense.

"It's not that those things are just going to be something that floors everybody when we do operate with it. But everybody's so good at breaking you down and analyzing you. They get a hold of every tape they can in order to do it. That's why we decided to hold some things back that we did pretty well in the spring."

Such caution was characteristic of Osborne as well.

A lot has changed since the Cornhuskers wrapped up a third national championship in four seasons with a 42-17 victory against Tennessee in the Orange Bowl game on Jan. 2. Osborne is no longer the coach, and many outstanding players have moved on after completing their eligibility.

Last season's sack leader, Wistrom is gone. Aaron Taylor, the Outland Trophy winner, is gone. Jason Peter, one of the best defensive tackles in school history, is gone. Scott Frost, one of the best quarterbacks, is gone. Ahman Green, the second-leading rusher all-time, is gone.

The loss of those players, as well as several others, would impact Nebraska in 1998 regardless of the head coach. That's the point Osborne was trying to make at the news conference in December.

Solich should be judged in such a context, rather than held to the standard of the past.

It won't be easy. But Solich seems to be up to the task. After the post-spring depth chart was released, he met with reporters. One asked him if being a head coach was all it was cracked up to be.

Solich managed to laugh.

"What kind of question is that?" he wanted to know. ■



HUSKERS AT A GLANCE

PROJECTED 1998 FINISH:

1998 SCHEDULE

Aug. 29	vs. Louisiana Tech\$	3 p.m.
Sept. 5	Ala.-Birmingham	12:30 p.m.
Sept. 12	@ California	6:30 p.m.
Sept. 26	Washington	TBA
Oct. 3	vs. Oklahoma St.&	TBA
Oct. 10	@ Texas A&M	TBA
Oct. 17	Kansas	12:30 p.m.
Oct. 24	Missouri	12:30 p.m.
Oct. 31	Texas	TBA
Nov. 7	@ Iowa St.	1 p.m.
Nov. 14	@ Kansas St.	1:10 p.m.
Nov. 27	Colorado	TBA

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& Arrowhead Stadium • Kansas City, Mo.
(Times are subject to change and are Central)



NORTH DIVISION

1997 RECORD: 13-0 CONFERENCE RECORD: 6-0

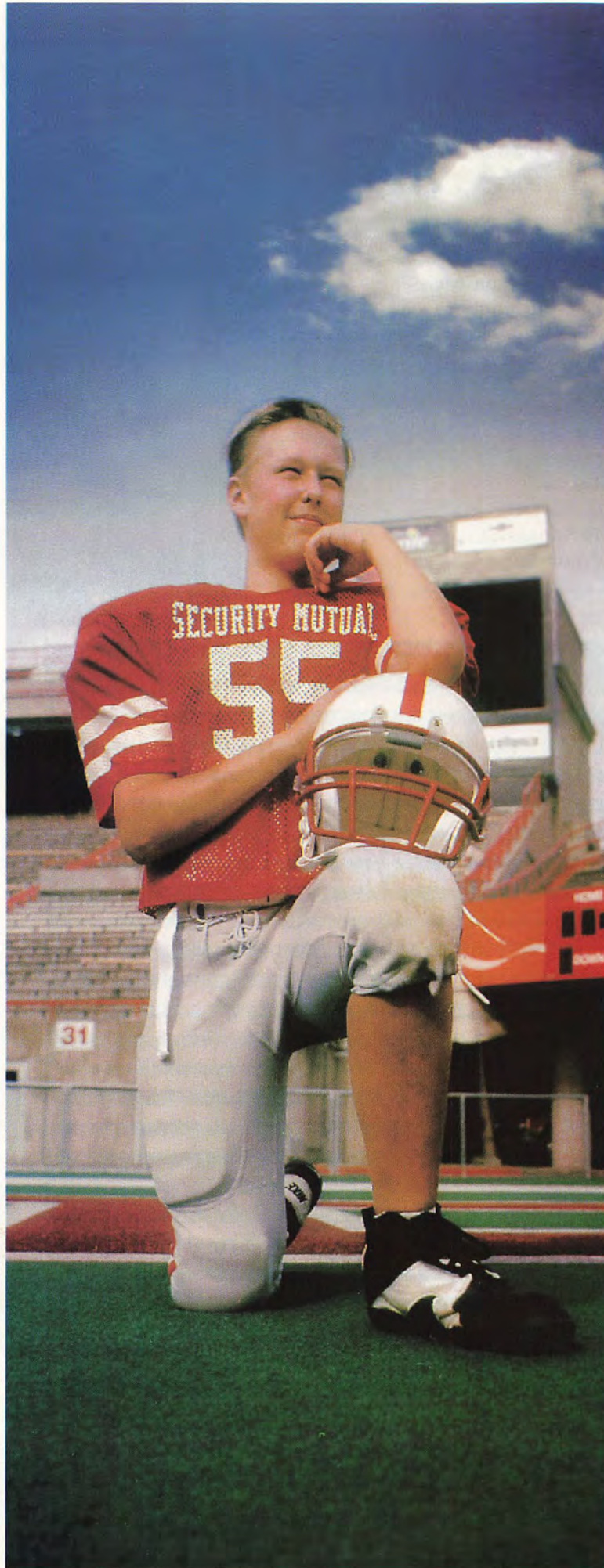
A 30	Akron	W, 59-14
S 13	Central Florida	W, 38-24
S 20	@ Washington	W, 27-14
O 4	Kansas St.	W, 56-26
O 11	@ Baylor	W, 49-21
O 18	Texas Tech	W, 29-0
O 25	@ Kansas	W, 35-0
N 1	Oklahoma	W, 69-7
N 8	@ Missouri	W, 45-38 (ot)
N 15	Iowa St.	W, 77-14
N 28	@ Colorado	W, 27-24
D 6	vs. Texas A&M%	W, 54-15
J 2	vs. Tennessee#	W, 42-17

% Big 12 Championship Game • San Antonio, Texas
Orange Bowl • Miami, Fla.

POST SPRING DEPTH CHART

SE 6 Kenny Cheatham*** 6-4 210 Sr.	LR 57 CHAD KELSAY*** 6-3 250 Sr.
3 Matt Davison* 6-0 180 So.	83 Kyle Vanden Bosch* 6-4 260 So.
(8) John Gibson 5-11 180 So.	93 Brandon Mooberry* 6-5 245 So.
80 Billy Haafke** 5-11 190 Sr.	
83 Craig Fischer* 6-0 180 Jr.	NT 96 Steve Warren** 6-1 305 Jr.
-or- 20 Tom Beveridge 6-0 190 So.	77 Bobby Gill 6-0 275 Jr.
LT 69 Adam Julch** 6-5 315 Jr.	DT 99 JASON WILTZ** 6-4 310 Sr.
57 Dave Volk 6-4 280 Fr.	91 Loran Kaiser* 6-5 255 So.
-or- 75 Kyle Kollmorgen 6-4 290 Fr.	
77 Jim Tansey 6-2 310 So.	RR 84 MIKE RUCKER*** 6-6 250 Sr.
LG 63 James Sherman** 5-2 295 Jr.	92 Travis Toline*** 6-3 245 Sr.
61 Brandt Wade*** 6-2 300 Sr.	-or- 81 Aaron Wills** 6-2 240 Jr.
73 Steve Alstadt 6-4 275 Fr.	SLB 37 TONY ORTIZ** 6-0 215 Jr.
C 59 JOSH HESKEW*** 6-3 290 Sr.	-or- 46 BRIAN SHAW** 6-1 215 Jr.
54 Dominic Raiola 6-2 300 Fr.	41 Rod Baker 6-0 225 So.
-or- 51 Matt Baldwin* 6-1 290 Jr.	49 Quint Hogrefe** 5-11 210 Sr.
78 Aaron Havlovic 6-3 280 Jr.	MLB 44 JAY FOREMAN*** 6-1 240 Sr.
RG 72 Ben Gessford* 6-2 290 Sr.	13 Carlos Polk* 6-3 245 So.
55 Russ Hochstein* 6-3 280 So.	39 Ben Buettenback** 5-11 210 Jr.
50 Jon Rutherford 6-3 290 Fr.	-or- 51 Jamie Burrow 6-1 230 Fr.
79 Chris Sealford 6-2 280 So.	WLB 1 Eric Johnson** 6-1 205 Sr.
RT 65 Jason Schwab* 6-1 300 Jr.	50 Julius Jackson** 6-0 235 Jr.
-or- 68 Jeff Clausen** 6-6 305 Jr.	47 Josh Kohl** 6-1 220 Jr.
76 Billy Diekmann 6-4 285 So.	LCB 16 ERWIN SWINEY* 6-0 185 So.
97 Lonnie Fulton 6-5 250 So.	9 Khari Reynolds* 5-10 185 So.
TE 88 Sheldon Jackson*** 6-4 245 Sr.	3 Jeff Hemje 6-0 185 Fr.
85 T.J. DeBates** 6-3 250 Jr.	FS 19 Clint Finley* 5-11 200 So.
87 Tracey Wistrom 6-4 215 Fr.	14 Dion Booker 6-1 205 Fr.
86 Derrick Roy 6-3 245 Sr.	-or- 42 Troy Watchhorn 5-11 195 Fr.
-or- 81 Jake McKee 6-1 230 So.	-or- 27 Greg McGraw 6-2 200 Jr.
QB 12 Bobby Newcombe* 6-0 195 So.	ROV 21 MIKE BROWN** 5-10 205 Jr.
7 Eric Crouch 6-0 190 Fr.	25 Joe Walker* 5-10 200 So.
9 Monte Christo** 6-0 195 Sr.	10 Brandon Quindt* 6-0 200 So.
-or- 16 Jay Runtz 6-0 195 So.	-or- 29 Gregg List** 6-0 220 Jr.
FB 45 JOEL MAKOVICKA*** 5-11 235 Sr.	RCB 22 RALPH BROWN** 5-9 180 Jr.
40 Billy Legate*** 5-11 230 Sr.	(1) Frankie London** 6-0 180 Jr.
-or- 15 Willie Miller* 6-0 230 So.	11 Jerome Peterson** 5-7 185 Jr.
22 Ben Kingston* 6-1 240 Jr.	28 Josh Anderson* 5-8 180 So.
IB 4 DeAngelo Evans* 5-9 210 So.	P 23 Bill Lafleur*** 5-11 200 Sr.
-or- 36 Correll Buckhalter* 6-0 225 So.	7 Dan Hadenfeldt* 5-11 200 Jr.
-or- 38 Dan Alexander* 6-0 250 So.	8 Brian Morro 5-9 180 Sr.
WB 14 LANCE BROWN*** 5-11 190 Sr.	PK 35 KRIS BROWN*** 5-10 205 Sr.
5 Shevin Wiggins** 5-11 200 Sr.	7 Dan Hadenfeldt* 5-11 200 Jr.
(1) Frankie London** 6-0 180 Jr.	28 Chace Long 6-0 200 So.
8 John Gibson 5-11 180 So.	
82 Sean Applegate* 5-9 190 Jr.	

* Letters earned/Returners with starting experience in bold
Starters in CAPS/ (I) indicates ranking if player moves to that position



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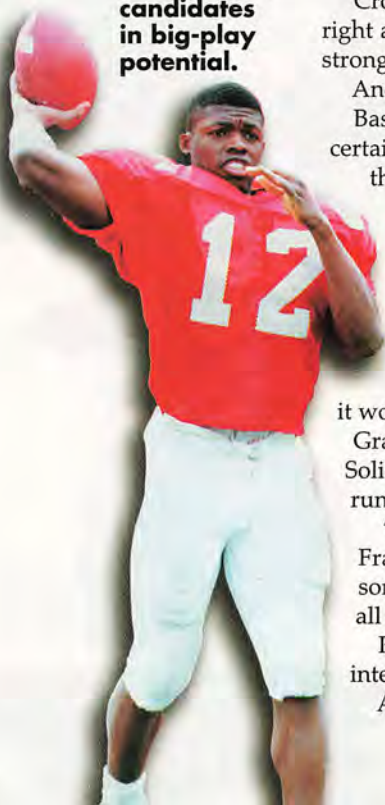
QUARTERBACK

A key to Crouch's surprising spring was running with the top two units rather than the lower units, as he did early in the spring.



Doug Devore

Newcombe ranked the highest of the top three quarterback candidates in big-play potential.



The envelope, please.

And the name of the No. 1 quarterback is . . . **Bobby Newcombe**.

The announcement came as no surprise to most who watched Nebraska during the spring. It came as a relief to Newcombe, who was "about a foot off the ground, floating a little bit."

Not that he doubted his ability. "All through spring practice I had it in my mind I had the ability to become No. 1," said Newcombe. "I didn't think that outright I should be."

"But I knew I had the ability to get the opportunity to be No. 1."

Still, there were times when he wasn't sure, when "I felt my performance wasn't at the level it should be to play quarterback," he said. "I had the strength inside to continue to work, to continue to have faith in myself, have faith that the Lord would guide me and lead me in the right direction."

That direction was up, to the top of the depth chart.

The soft-spoken sophomore from Albuquerque, N.M., won the job in competition with junior **Frankie London**, sophomore **Jay Runty** and redshirted freshman **Eric Crouch**.

Hard-luck senior **Monte Christo** shared the No. 2 spot with Newcombe on the pre-spring depth chart but suffered torn ligaments in his right thumb, taking him out of the competition.

In truth, London graded highest from the beginning of the spring until the end.

"If you really want to be hard, what the actual scores were, Frankie was the best, running the plays, getting us in the right plays and audibles," quarterbacks coach Turner Gill said.

But that was to be expected, according to Gill, because experience should count for something, and London was easily the most experienced of the group — at quarterback, anyway.

He was **Scott Frost's** backup last season, playing in 10 games, carrying 42 times for 198 yards (a 4.7 yards-per-carry average) and completing 10-of-22 passes for 201 yards.

Newcombe, who was moved to wingback after the third game of the season, attempted only one pass, which was complete for a 15-yard gain, and made a mistake on the first snap he took at quarterback in a mop-up role against Akron in the opener. He turned the mistake into a 22-yard run.

Crouch had no experience, having spent the season as a redshirt, recovering from surgeries on his right ankle and left knee. The surgeries "kind of slowed me down in becoming stronger," he said.

And when he returned to practice, he played quarterback on the scout team.

Based on grades, London was the most consistent, a quality to be desired, certainly. But "there are so many other factors," said Gill. "We're trying to get the best situation for a quarterback."

"I told all of the quarterbacks (at) the first (position) meeting, it's not going to be etched in stone, (based on) the person's grades. You're looking at the whole picture."

Matt Turman consistently graded higher than **Tommie Frazier** and **Brook Berringer**, according to Gill. There is more to being successful than doing the right thing at the right time, however.

Had the disparity in the grades of London, Newcombe and Crouch been more significant, it would have mattered more than it did. But "there was not really a big difference," Gill said.

Grades were only one of eight areas in which the quarterbacks were evaluated, said coach Frank Solich. The other categories included: experience, durability, big-play potential, passing accuracy, running ability, reading defenses and leadership, in which "certainly all three scored high."

"When you added them up, it came out Bobby," Solich said. "But our feeling is that both Frankie and Eric could lead this ballclub and do a great job. That's what makes the decision somewhat unique. There were two or three ways this could have gone, and maybe have worked all three ways."

Prior to the end of spring practice, Newcombe, Crouch and London all indicated they might be interested in switching positions if they didn't end up as the No. 1 quarterback.

After the decision was made, London opted to move.



Ryan Soderlin

OUTLOOK

QUARTERBACK Returning

Bobby Newcombe
Eric Crouch
Monte Christo
Jay Runty
Lost
Scott Frost



Nebraska felt it could win with any of three top signal-calling prospects: (left to right) Eric Crouch, Frankie London and Bobby Newcombe.

to pull a player out of a starting job because of a mistake here or there," said Solich. "Certainly if a player's playing well, it would be very difficult to move by a starter. But yet, if a player's not playing up to his potential and someone else is deserving to make the move, then that would happen. But that would happen at any position."

Newcombe still has to "go out and perform," Gill said. "I'm anticipating him doing that."

All things considered, Crouch had an outstanding spring.

Being No. 2, "I think he's got to feel pretty good about that, knowing how complicated our offense is and what it takes to direct our offense," said Solich. "He's really performed well. I think he feels good about himself."

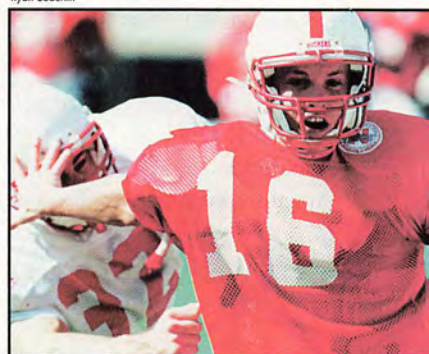
The attention focused on the quarterbacks during the spring would have been a concern under most circumstances, particularly considering Newcombe and Crouch are only one year removed from high school. "I think normally it would," Solich said. "But you're talking about very mature players."

"Even though we indicated they're very inexperienced on the field, they have not handled themselves like inexperienced players. I think in dealing with them, you'll see they're very mature." ■

"We left that, really, up to those guys," Solich said. "Eric really wanted to stay at quarterback, and Frankie wanted to move. So that seemed to work itself out. They seemed so sure what they wanted to do, and we were for that. Our feeling all along was, ideally you'd want to try to get two of the three on the field if you could. It may or may not work that way this fall. We'll see."

London will play either wide receiver or cornerback in the fall, while Crouch will resume competition with Newcombe at quarterback, though "not on a daily basis. You're not going

Ryan Soderlin



Jay Runty looked good against the lower-unit defenses, but it was apparent early on that he was not part of the three-way race for No. 1.

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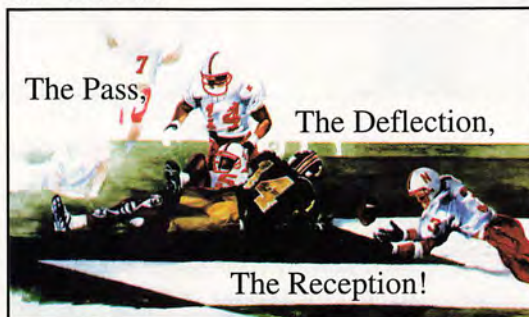


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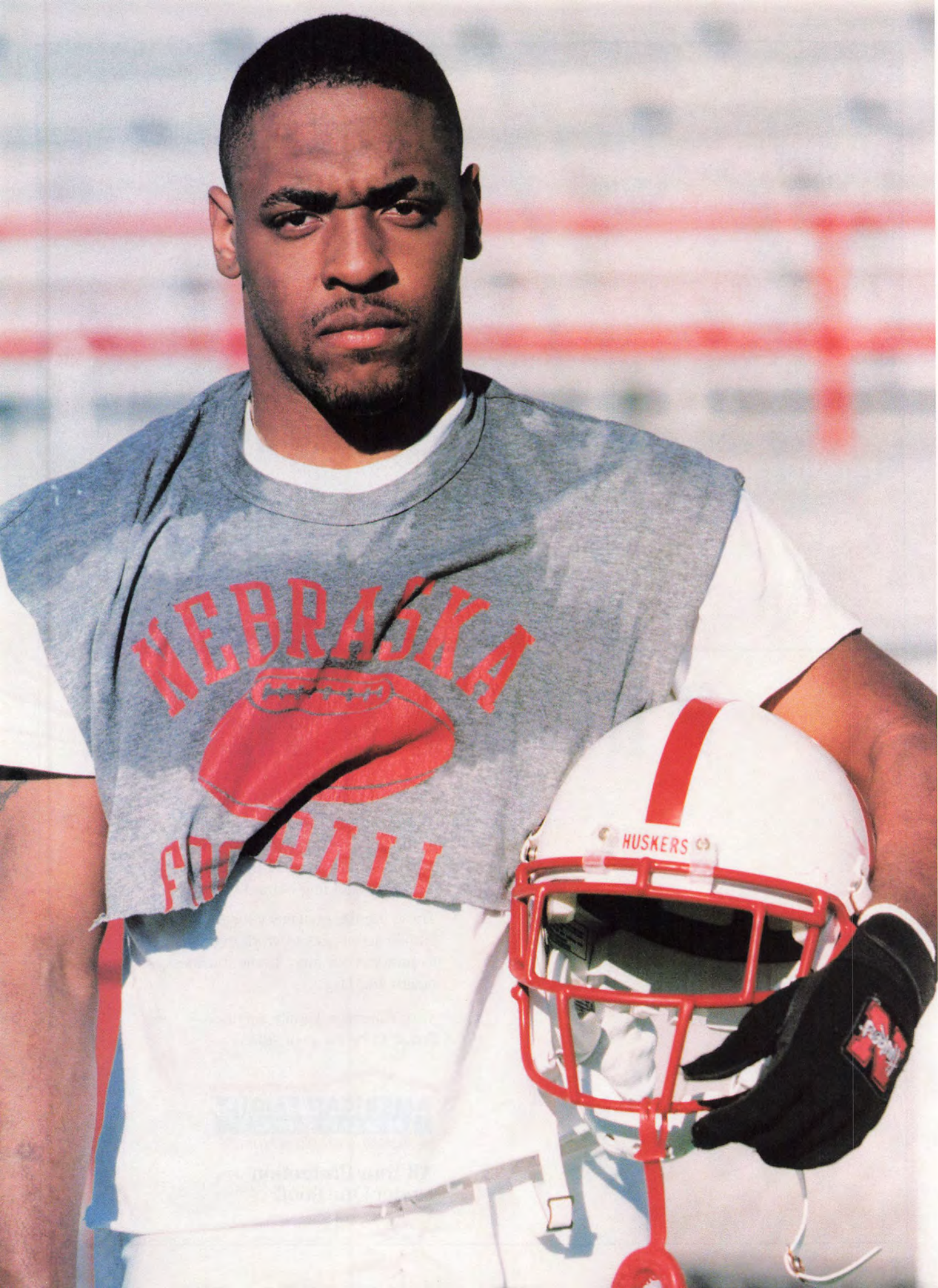
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I-BACK / FULLBACK

DeAngelo Evans carried on the fifth play of the spring game. He took a handoff from Frankie London and gained 4 yards up the middle. Defensive tackle Loran Kaiser stopped him.

London handed him the ball on the next play as well. Again Evans tried the middle, getting only 1 yard before being smothered by middle linebacker Jay Foreman and nosetackle Bobby Gill.

Evans' right ankle bothered him on the second carry, so when he came out of the game after that first series, he didn't return. Under different circumstances, Evans probably could have returned to action — and would have. Anyone who watched him carry 32 times for 130 yards and score three touchdowns against Texas in the 1996 Big 12 championship game knows that.

The ankle sprain also might have been a small setback for reporters. "I was going to show you all a little something today," he said.

If Evans really is healthy, he's likely to show everyone a lot in the fall.

Sophomore Correll Buckhalter plans on using his size this fall to punish defenders instead of juking them.

He provided a preview of coming attractions as a true freshman in 1996, rushing for 776 yards and 14 touchdowns, despite sharing time with Damon Benning as a backup to Ahman Green.

His potential seemed unlimited. But by season's end, he was hampered by a severe abdominal injury that sidelined him for the 1996 Orange Bowl and threatened his career.

He underwent surgery to correct the problem twice, in July and in October of 1997. For all intents and purposes, he wasn't able to practice from the end of his freshman season until this spring.

In that context, Evans' limited action in the spring game was, as he said, no big deal.

Coach Frank Solich wasn't overly concerned, either. He seemed pleased with what he saw of Evans during the spring. He thought he saw flashes of Evans' freshman form.

Evans' return goes a long way toward answering the question of how Green, the No. 2 career rusher in Cornhusker history and an early-

out for the NFL, will be replaced. Evans emerged from the spring sharing the No. 1 position at I-back with sophomores Correll Buckhalter and Dan Alexander.

The depth chart says Evans or Buckhalter or Alexander, "which would mean that really going into fall camp, any one of the three guys could end up being a starter," Solich said.

In some ways, Buckhalter has been overlooked, despite playing well in the spring. He was a pleasant surprise as a true freshman, backing up Green and rushing for 311 yards and six touchdowns.

At 6-foot and 227 pounds, he's a slashing runner. "I'm going to show defenders my power," Buckhalter told the *Lincoln Journal Star*. "A smaller back has to juke. I can go right into contact."

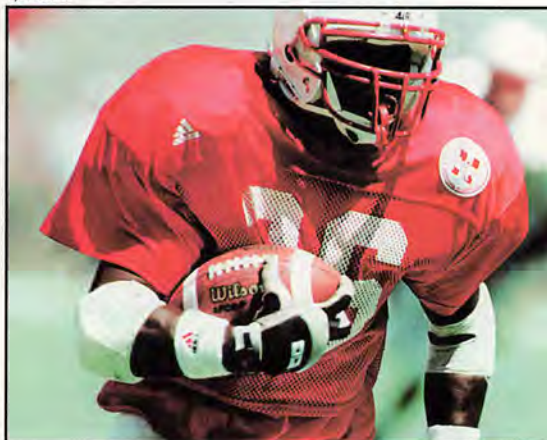
Alexander also can go right into contact. He's Buckhalter's height and 23 pounds heavier.

He adds a unique dimension to Nebraska's offense. Usually, "you see the quarterback and then you've got the big fullback and then you've kind of got the lighter I-back in there," said Alexander, who is completely healed from the knee injury he suffered in the 1997 spring game.

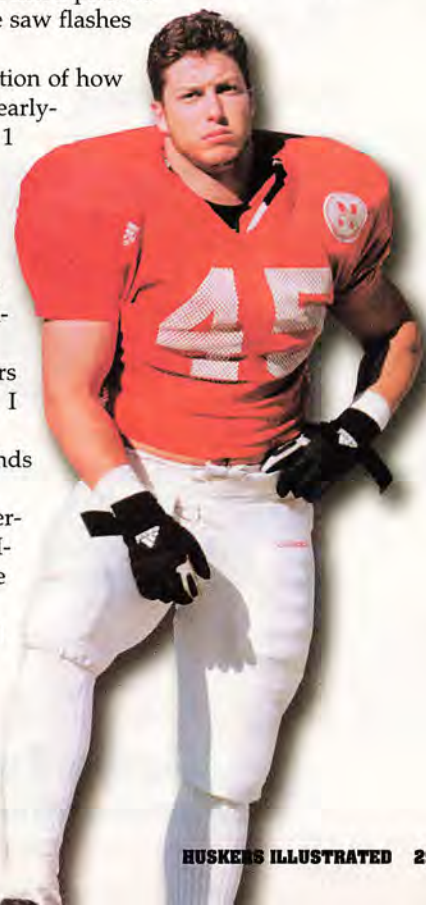
DeAngelo Evans' 776 rushing yards in 1996 were the third-most by a Husker freshman, behind only Ahman Green's 1,086 in 1995 and Calvin Jones' 900 yards in 1991.

Evans, Buckhalter and Alexander will continue to push each other in the fall. "I think the I-back situation will be as it's been a fair number of years," said Solich. "We've got quality athletes, and they'll need to stay on top of their game, whoever the starter is, to remain the starter."

Ryan Soderlin



Joel Makovicka received national attention after scoring a fullback school record 10 touchdowns a year ago.



There is no doubt who the starting fullback will be. Senior **Joel Makovicka**, who earned all-conference honorable mention last season, ranks with the Cornhuskers' best at that position.

He was fourth among major college fullbacks in rushing a year go, gaining 685 yards — the fourth-highest single-season total by a fullback in Nebraska history. He scored 10 touchdowns, including nine by rushing, a school record for a fullback. And he caught five passes for 60 yards and one score.

He carried 105 times as a junior and never was tackled for a loss.

Makovicka's reputation is widespread. "He got drafted, didn't he?" former Cornhusker Neil Smith, an All-Pro defensive lineman for the Super Bowl champion Denver Broncos, wanted to know as Makovicka received his national championship ring on the night before the spring game.

When told that Makovicka had another season of eligibility, Smith just smiled.

Makovicka was held out of much of the full-contact work during the spring because of a sore knee, allowing the

other fullbacks an opportunity to show what they could do. Sophomore **Willie Miller** emerged sharing second team with senior **Billy Legate**, followed by junior **Ben Kingston**.

The 6-foot, 230-pound Miller played tailback at West High School in Bellevue, Neb., rushing for 1,527 yards as a senior. That background might have slowed his development, because "there was a split-second where I wanted to be a tailback here," he told Mitch Sherman of the *Omaha World-Herald*.

Now, "I may want the ball. But the longer I'm here, the more I think about things in a team way."

A fullback who can carry the ball as well as block is important. But he might not get many carries in a backfield that includes sophomore quarterback **Bobby Newcombe** and a healthy Evans.

Even though the top three I-backs will go into the fall fairly equal, "I don't want to make too much out of that," Solich said.

"But all three are very capable players."

Evans is just a little more capable when he's healthy. ■

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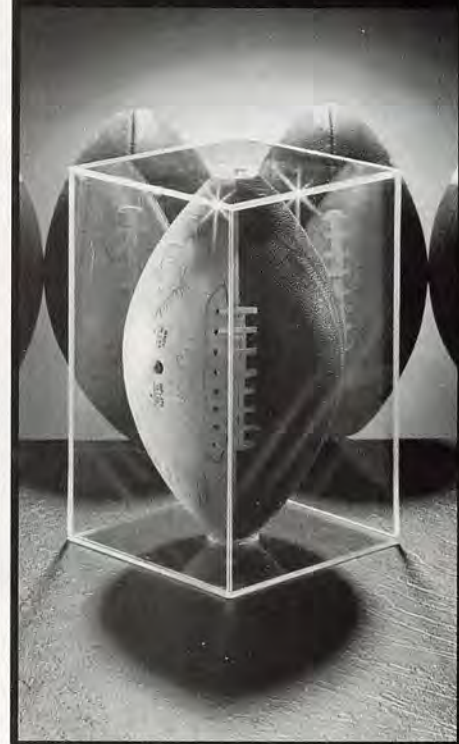
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TIGHT END

It's not easy being a tight end at Nebraska these days, not if your self-esteem depends on catching passes, anyway. The Cornhusker tight ends caught only 16 passes last season between them.

Sheldon Jackson had 11 of the receptions, for 189 yards and two touchdowns.

Those two touchdown catches were the most on the team.

Jackson was easily the biggest receiving threat among Nebraska's tight ends last season. Nevertheless, when he went into a blocking slump about the time of the Washington game, he was briefly demoted on the depth chart. Tight ends who don't block well don't play. It's that simple.

With almost zero depth at tight end, Nebraska should give little used senior Dorrick Roy (86) and incoming freshman Jon Bowling looks in the fall.



Jon Waller

Jackson's blocking quickly improved, and he returned to the good graces of receivers coach Ron Brown. He got his only start of the season at Missouri, and he wrapped up his junior season by catching four passes for 56 yards in the Orange

Bowl game victory against Tennessee.

The four receptions were a team-high. The 56 yards were a game-high. Three of the receptions were third-down conversions.

Jackson's performance was reminiscent of Cornhusker tight ends of old, and it provides a springboard for his senior season.

Jackson appears ready to set an example for a group of young and inexperienced tight ends. **Tim Carpenter** and **Vershan Jackson**, with whom he rotated, have departed, and "I think he sees himself as a leader now, after going around the block a few times," Brown told the *Omaha World-Herald*.

None of those behind him on the depth chart have been around the block even once. Junior **T.J. DeBates** has the most experience, playing in all but the Washington game last season.

DeBates caught one pass, a 7-yarder to set up a touchdown in the Big 12 championship game. "He's going to have to play like a veteran this year," Brown said.

Offensive tackle **Jason Schwab** said that DeBates will be up to the task.

"He never takes a play off. He's a very intense player," said Schwab, who like DeBates, is from Minnesota. "It's overwhelming how hard he works, at everything, school, everything."

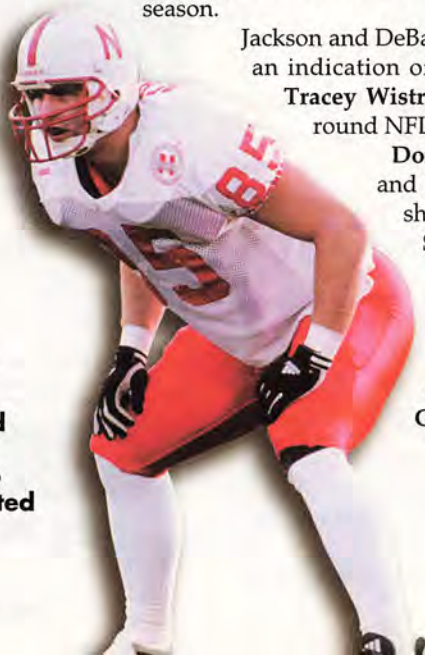
DeBates, a fisheries and wildlife major, was a first-team Academic All-Big 12 selection last season.

Jackson and DeBates were the only tight ends listed on the pre-spring depth chart, an indication of the lack of experience at the position. Redshirted freshman **Tracey Wistrom**, the brother of departed Lombard Award winner and first-round NFL draft pick **Grant Wistrom**, finished the spring at No. 3.

Dorrick Roy, a senior who has yet to play enough to earn a letter, and **Jake McKee**, a sophomore walkon from Goodland, Kan., were sharing the No. 4 position. Junior **Travis Antholz** and sophomore **Sasho Becvarovski**, who moved from offensive guard, also saw action in the spring.

It appears the competition for playing time along with Jackson and DeBates will continue during two-a-day practices in the fall, with scholarship freshmen **Jon Bowling** and **Aaron Golliday** joining in. ■

There will be no learning curve allowed for junior T.J. DeBates, who will be expected to play like a veteran.



If Sheldon Jackson can consistently block well in '98 he will have a chance to be a key figure in the Huskers' offensive plans.

OUTLOOK

TIGHT END Returning

Sheldon Jackson
T.J. DeBates
Tracey Wistrom
Dorrick Roy
Jake McKee

Lost

Tim Carpenter
Vershan Jackson



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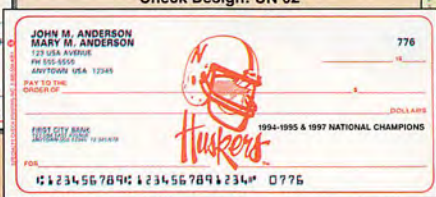
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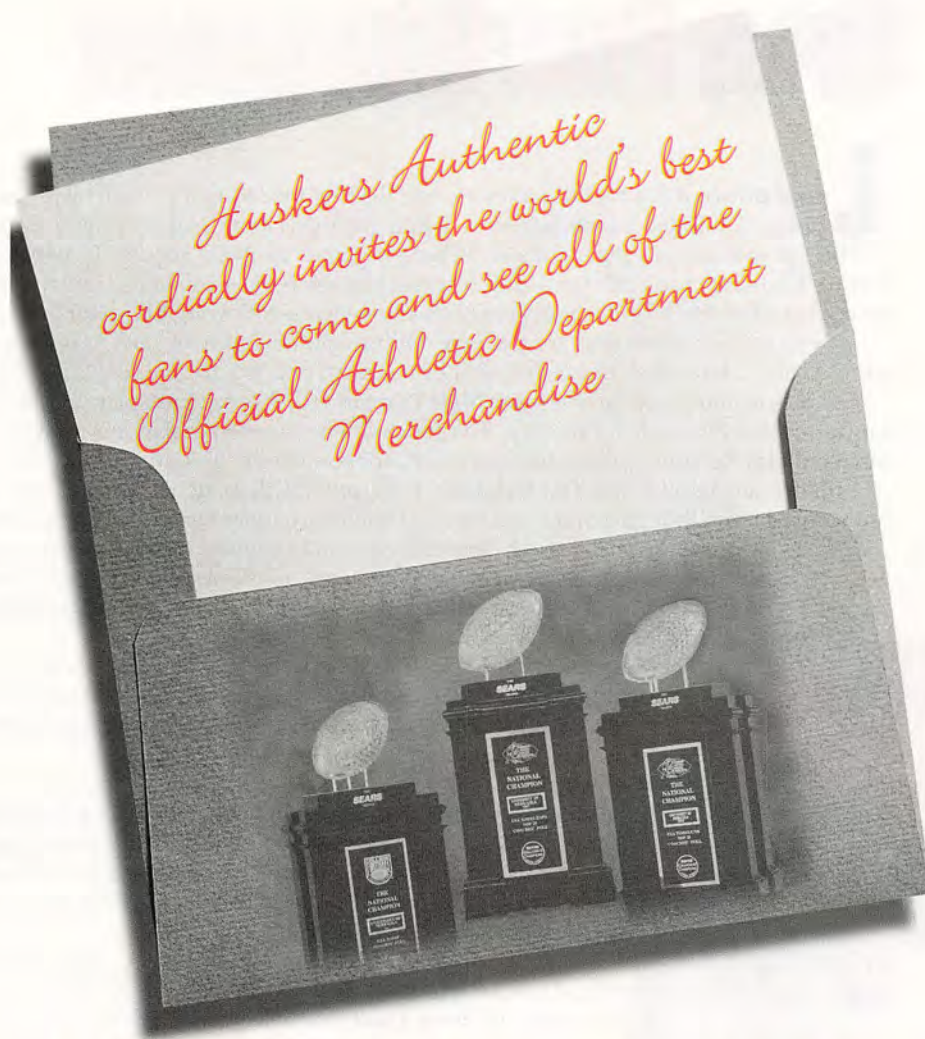
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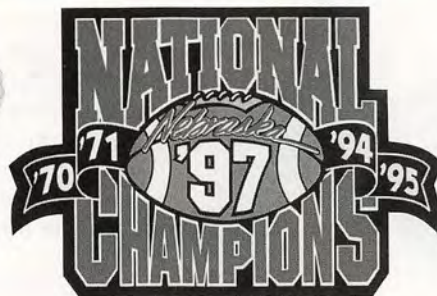
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SPLIT END/WINGBACK

Lance Brown did a backflip after scoring his first touchdown at Nebraska. The flip, which was planned, fulfilled a promise Brown had made to his mom, Valerie Brandt, two years earlier.

She sat with him in the stands at Nebraska games in 1993. Though Brown was a scholarship recruit, he didn't enroll full-time until second semester because of a knee injury suffered during the final week of practice for the Nebraska Shrine Bowl game following his senior year in high school.

"It was really a down time for both me and my mother," Brown said. "I remember after the first game, I said: 'Mom, the first touchdown I ever score, I'm going to do a backflip for you.'"

So, after teaming with quarterback **Matt Turman** on a 39-yard pass play against Arizona State, he ran to the sideline and did the flip. The touchdown was memorable, not only for Brown and his mom but also for Sun Devils coach Bruce Snyder because only 38 seconds remained in the game.

Brown's touchdown and **Ted Retzlaff's** extra-point kick made the final score 77-28. Snyder was not amused, even though a breakdown in his team's secondary contributed to the touchdown.

Cornhusker head coach Tom Osborne and receivers coach Ron Brown weren't particularly amused, either — by the backflip. "I got a little slack from Coach Osborne and Coach Brown. But I told them the situation, and it didn't cause a penalty, so they kind of let it go," said Lance Brown.

The Cornhuskers' senior wingback is a born entertainer. He was a "gym rat since I was probably 3-years-old," said Brown. "I was always in the gym. My dad was the gymnastics coach, and I was always trying new moves, flipping around and cracking my head on things.

"When you're young, you don't know any better. It was fun."

So was dancing, a passion that runs in his family. "My grandmother was a dancer and choreographer, forever," he said. "My mom and my biological father opened up a dance studio and a gymnastics club; it's still going in Omaha. My oldest sister is a dance teacher. And my godmother was a dance teacher."

Brown's exuberance also manifests itself in talking trash on the field. He's among the Cornhuskers' best trash talkers on offense, a fact noted by **Scott Frost** two seasons ago. Brown can hold his own, something he's been able to do since he was catching passes at Papillion-LaVista High School.

"The offensive side of the ball is a lot more mental than the defense," he said. "So the defense has an opportunity to be as loud and as trash-talking as it wants to be.

"I'm trying to give the offense a little bit of something to come back at them with. There are a lot of vocal leaders on defense, so I'm trying to help our offense out in the vocal aspect.

"I've pretty much always been that way."

The hazards of trash talking by a 5-foot-11, 190-pound receiver are obvious. The payback for ill-chosen words can come in a blindside hit from a linebacker over the middle.

Brown refuses to be intimidated, however. "I hear a lot of: 'We're going to get you (number) 14.' I hope you

get me better than I'm going to get you when I have my chance because I'm not going to let up," he said. "I'm not the biggest guy out there, but I'm going to come with as much authority as I can."

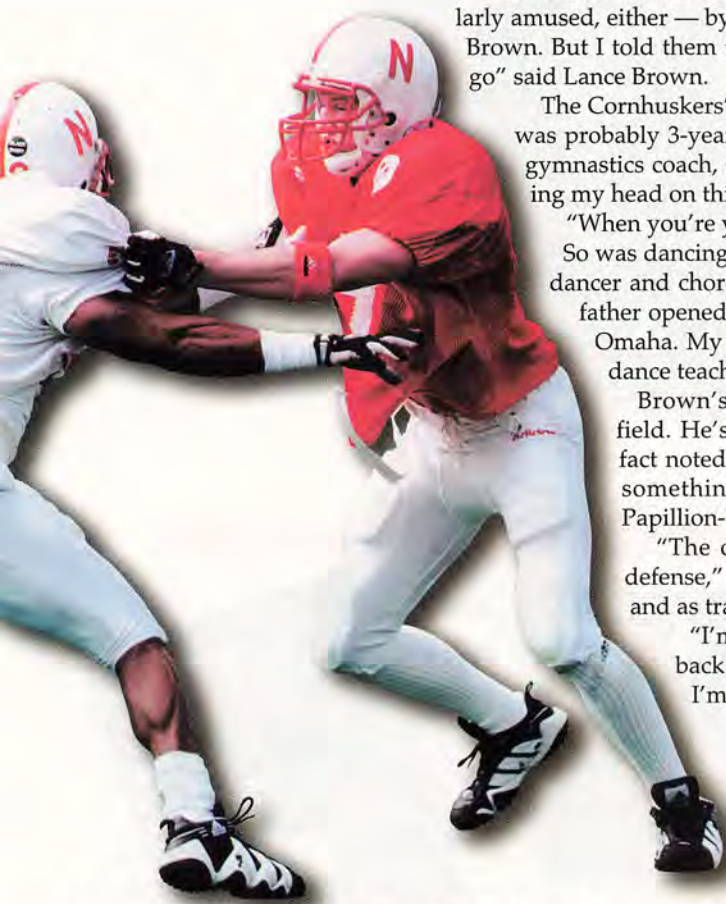
That's the mindset of all the wide receivers, according to Brown. The position should be a strength, with four of the top six returning. Only **Jeff Lake** and **Bobby Newcombe** are missing. And Newcombe, of course, has returned to quarterback.

Senior **Shevin Wiggins** alternated with Brown at wingback and started two games last season, while senior **Kenny Cheatham** and sophomore **Matt Davison** return at split end.

Cheatham tied I-back **Ahman Green** for the team lead in pass receptions with 14 (for 191 yards), despite missing three games because of a pulled quadriceps. Cheatham had four starts.

Davison, one of six true freshmen to play last season, led the Cornhuskers in receiving yards with 232 on 11 catches, four of which were good for 25 yards or more. Davison's one touchdown catch was the season's most memorable play, coming on the final play of regulation against Missouri.

Spectacular catches, like the one Matt Davison made at Missouri last year, grab the fans' attention, but it's down-field blocking that keeps Nebraska's receivers in the lineup.



Sophomore **John Gibson**, like Brown a graduate of Papillion-LaVista High, returned in the spring after being sidelined last season with a severe knee injury, suffered in practice after the first game — in which Gibson caught two passes for 18 yards. "It'll take a little bit, but he'll be ready," Brown said.

Junior **Sean Applegate**, a walkon from Lincoln, Neb., also had a solid spring and will figure in the mix, as could former quarterback **Frankie London**, depending on what he decides.

OUTLOOK

SPLIT END Returning

Kenny Cheatham
Matt Davison
Billy Haafke
Craig Fischer
Tom Beveridge

Lost

Jeff Lake

WINGBACK Returning

Lance Brown
Shevin Wiggins
Frankie London
John Gibson
Sean Applegate

Lost

Sean Wieting

The wide receiver position "should be one of the most solid as far as experience since I've been here," said Brown, who caught 12 passes for 226 yards (second on the team) last season. "A lot of us have two or three years playing time under our belts, and a lot of skill and ability.

"We didn't get the ball much last year as far as receiving. But that's just because our running game was so dominant. If we're called upon this year, hopefully, we'll be able to make some plays. But if we're running the ball up and down the field on somebody, we're not going to have any complaints."

Blocking remains the standard by which NU's wide receivers are measured.

Brown has had to learn to block. His high school team was "pass-oriented," he said. "I blocked if the running back was right behind me, and that was about it. I come down here and they throw this block-first mentality at you and if you don't block you won't play. With our offense, it's crucial.

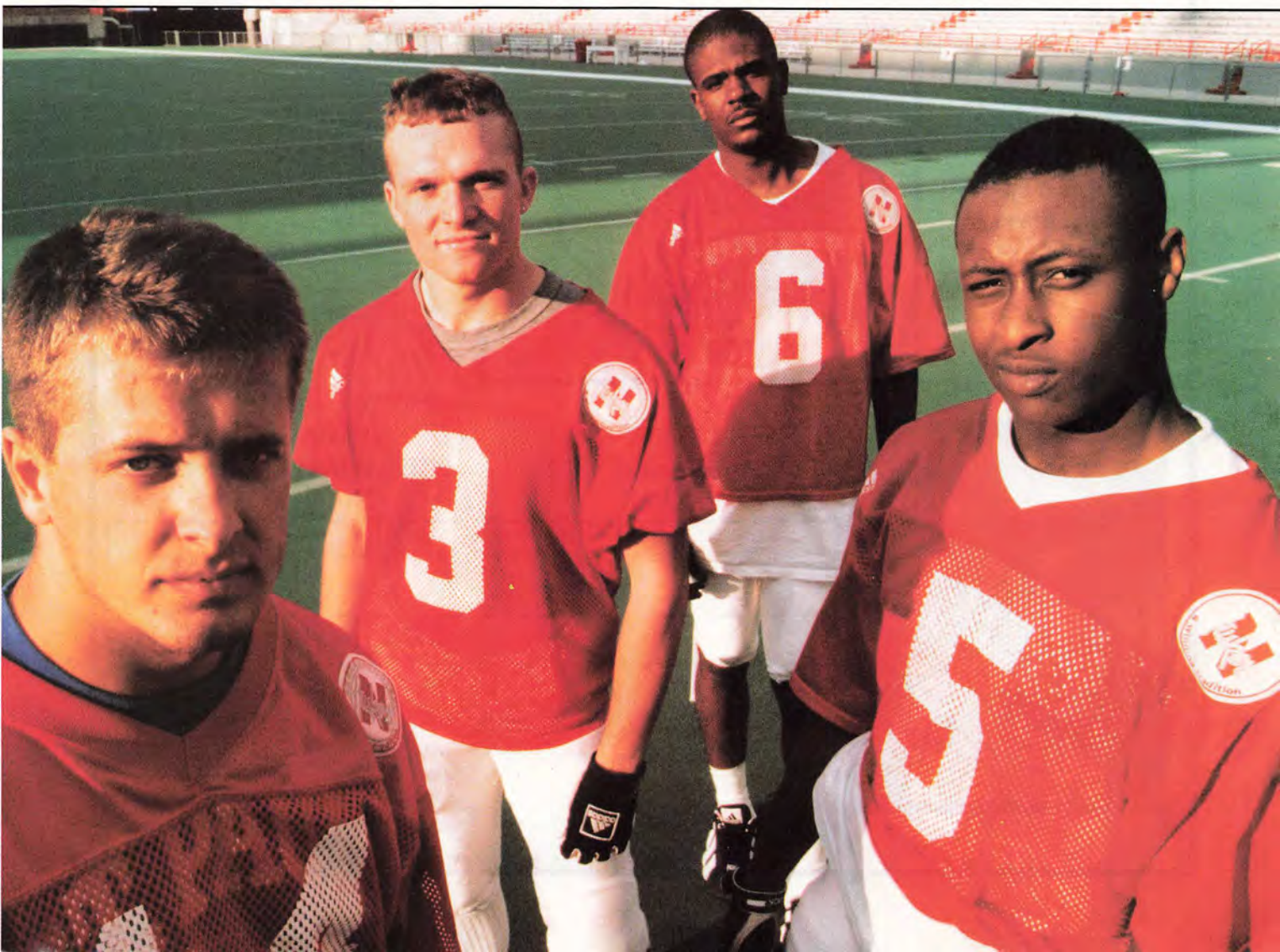
"I feel I can get on the field and handle my guy in any type of formation, if I have to go against backers, safeties, corners, whoever it is. I feel confident my guy won't make the play."

And Brown won't hesitate to tell the guy.

"Coach (Ron) Brown pretty much knows that's my mentality now,"

Lance said. "He doesn't want me out there showboating or anything. But I think he understands I'm getting the job done. If I can gain an edge over the secondary or whoever I'm going against by throwing a little trash his way, I will."

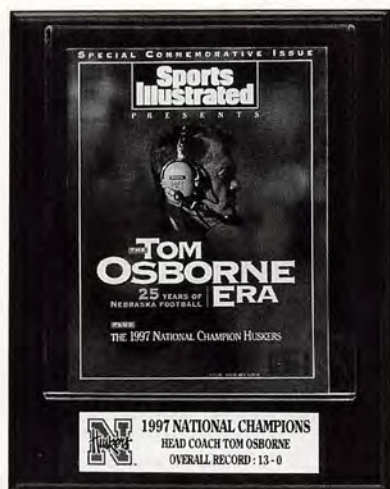
The strongest offensive position returns four lettermen from last year's squad — (clockwise from bottom left) Lance Brown, Matt Davison, Kenny Cheatham and Shevin Wiggins.





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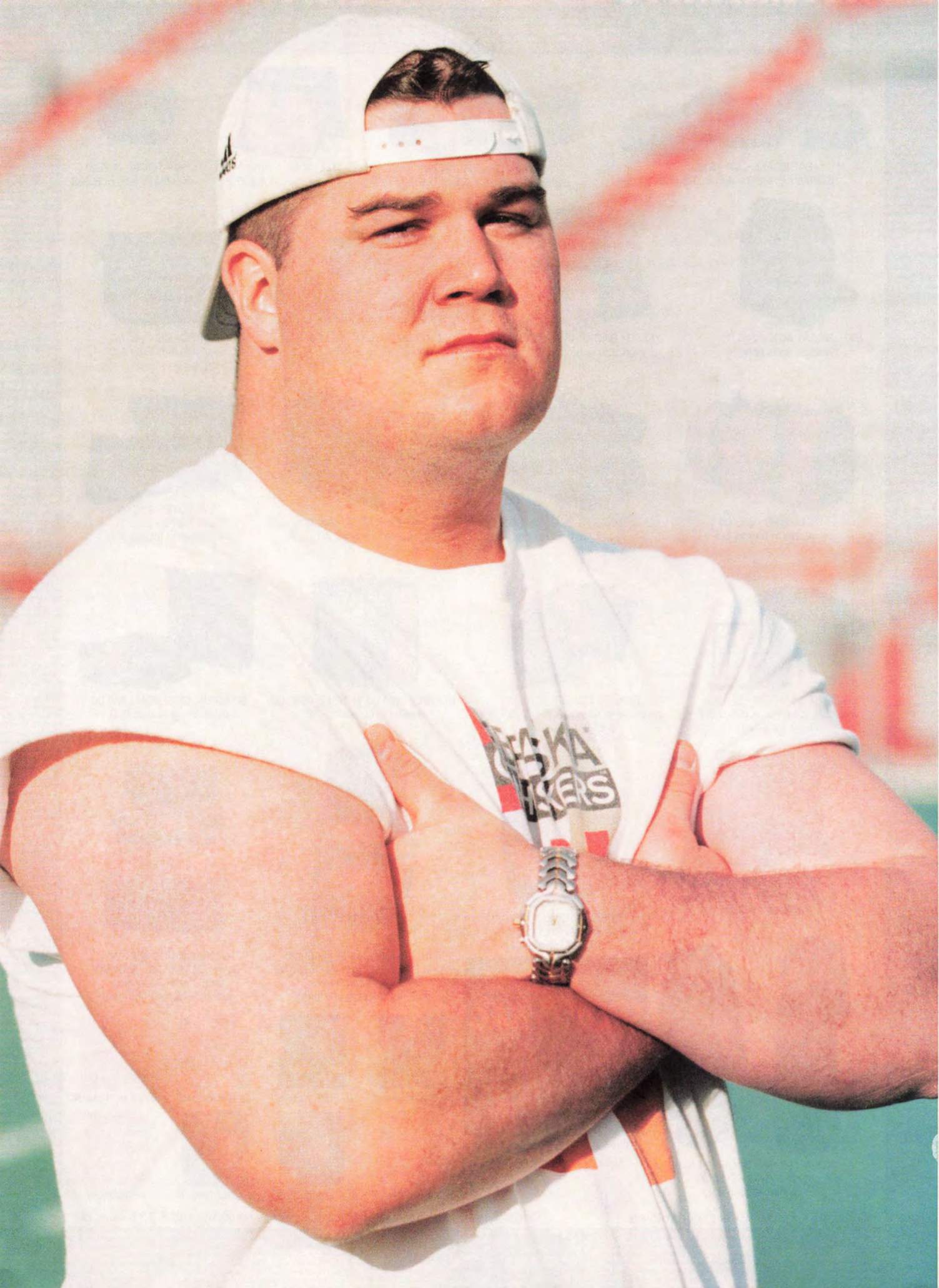
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OFFENSIVE LINE

Josh Heskew's back bothered him. A lot. "It hurt all season," he said during the spring.

"It seemed like it really didn't hurt as bad in games as it did when I was sitting around or if I was practicing or something like that. But there was a lot of pain, especially toward the latter part of the season. I got in there, and I couldn't even stand up straight because of the pain."

OUTLOOK

LEFT TACKLE

Returning

Adam Julch
Dave Volk
Kyle Kollmorgen
Jim Tansey

Lost

Fred Pollack
Mike Van Cleave

LEFT GUARD

Returning

James Sherman
Brandt Wade
Steve Alstadt
Aaron Taylor

Center

Returning

Josh Heskew
Dominic Raiola
Matt Baldwin
Aaron Havlovic
Matt Hoskinson

RIGHT GUARD

Returning

Ben Gessford
Russ Hochstein
Jon Rutherford
Chris Saalfeld
Jon Zatechka

RIGHT TACKLE

Returning

Jason Schwab
Jeff Clausen
Billy Diekmann
Lonnie Fulton
Eric Anderson

Heskew won't have to continue to prove his determination by playing with pain this season. He underwent surgery on his back in mid-February, and "right now, I feel good," he said.

Heskew was sidelined during the spring while he rehabilitated his back. While his teammates practiced, he ran. While they scrimmaged, he watched and offered "a little constructive criticism."

Heskew is the only returning starter from a line that cleared the way for an attack that led the nation in total offense (513.7), rushing offense (392.6) and scoring (47.1).

Rebuilding the offensive line was a priority during the spring, with senior Ben Gessford and juniors Adam Julch, James Sherman, Jason Schwab and Jeff Clausen finishing atop the depth chart.

Schwab and Clausen shared the No. 1 position at right tackle.

Julch and Clausen were injured during the spring game to further impede the line's development. Julch suffered torn ligaments in his right ankle. Clausen suffered a broken bone in his left hand.

Clausen's injury was "probably not as bad of a blow to us because he's still going to be able to have a summer of working on agility drills," said coach Frank Solich. "He'll be handicapped a little bit with upper-body work, in the weight room. But he'll be able to do a lot of lower-body work."

Julch, however, underwent surgery to repair the ligaments, and he'll be on crutches for a time. As a result, "it's going to be two months before he's able to run," Solich said.

"But yet, I think he'll still have a great chance to be ready for the fall. We'll see. Those big guys, sometimes, with those kind of injuries, if they're not careful, they check in about 30 pounds overweight, and about the time you get them in shape, we're kicking off for a bowl game."

"We've got to make certain that's not the case with Adam."

The 6-foot-5 Julch, among the team's biggest players, weighed as much as 327 pounds during the spring. "Adam is a person who's driven, so I think he'll be fine," said Solich.

Julch, who underwent back surgery two years ago, attacked spring practice with an enthusiasm that is typical among players who finally have an opportunity to become a starter.

So did the others. "That's a big key," Heskew said. "I think maybe before they were just trying to get through practice."

But now they look at that depth chart and see themselves at No. 1 and take pride in it. That's something you have to do as a starter at Nebraska, being an offensive lineman.

"When you know you're at the top, you know you need to take charge for yourself and everybody else. It's a big pride thing, and once you take pride in what you do, you're going to do it well."

Nebraska can't afford to have senior Josh Heskew, the only returning starter on the offensive line, watching games from the sideline while nursing injuries this fall.

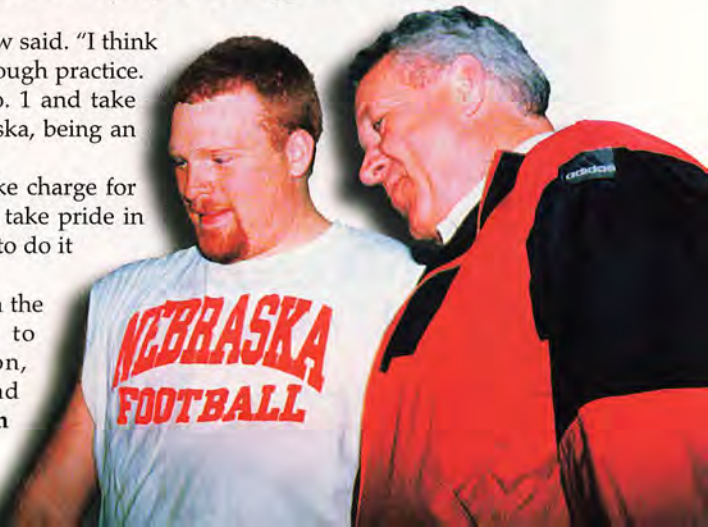
Gessford, the only one on the first team who came to Nebraska as a walkon, replaces departed Outland Trophy winner Aaron

James Sherman has battled injuries during his career, undergoing knee surgery twice and missing two games last season because of a strained knee.

Bob Berry



The Huskers have ranked among the nation's top three in rushing offense in 20 of Milt Tenopir's 24 seasons as an offensive line coach. Players such as Adam Julch intend on keeping the streak alive in '98.





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Taylor at right guard. Gessford, who played in eight games last season, will give East High in Lincoln a starter in the Cornhusker offensive line for the eighth consecutive season.

He follows East High graduates and brothers **Rob** and **Jon Zatechka**.

Depth in the offensive interior will be provided by, among others, red-shirted freshmen **Dave Volk**, **Kyle Kollmorgen**, **Dominic Raiola** and **Jon Rutherford**, sophomore **Russ Hochstein**, junior **Matt Baldwin** and senior **Brandt Wade**. Raiola, a center and deep snapper, had a particularly good spring.

Raiola and Baldwin were listed on the post-spring depth chart as sharing No. 2 behind Heskew, who expects to adapt quickly to those surrounding him during two-a-day practices in the fall.

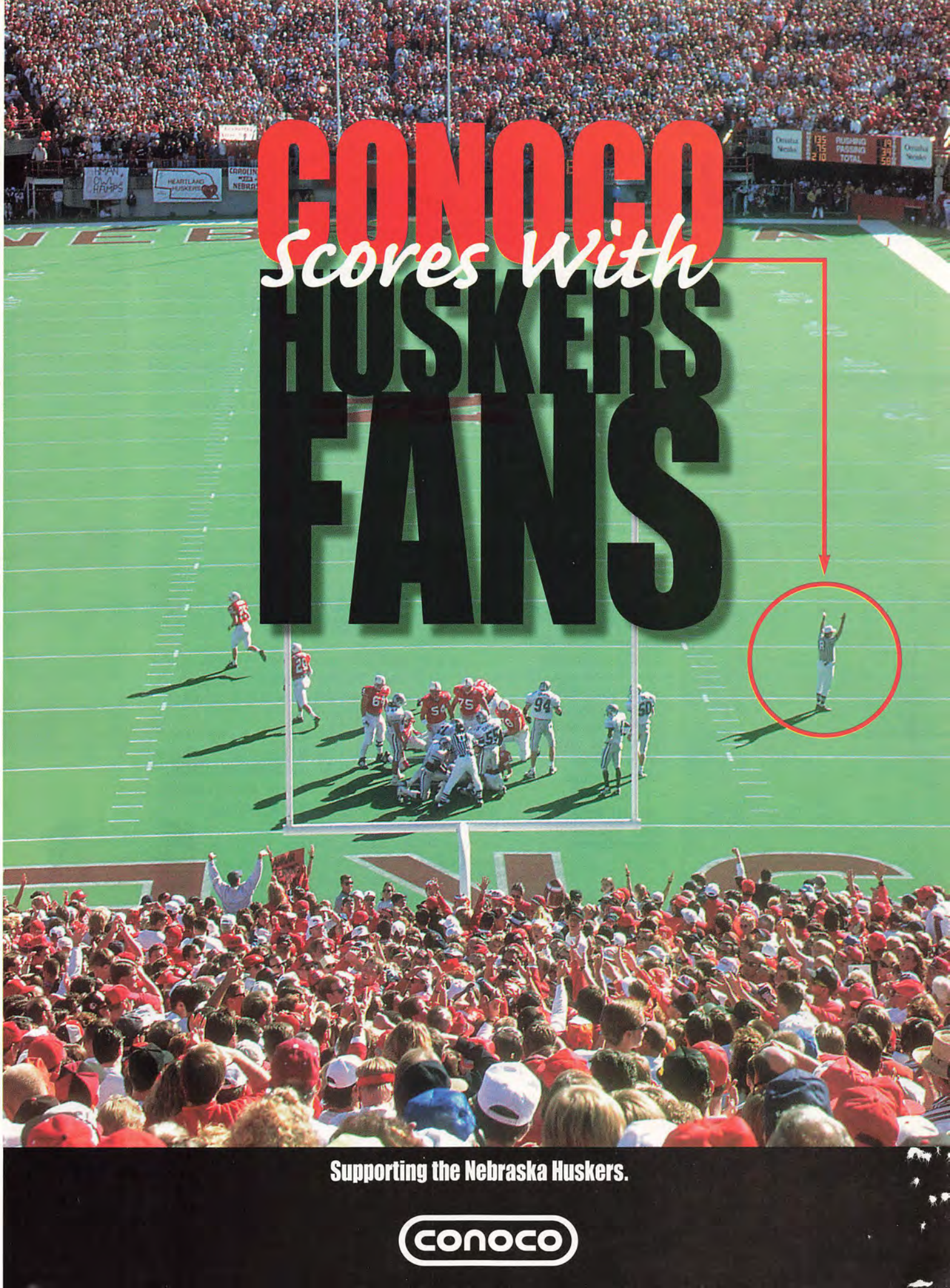
"Last year, it came back pretty quick because I had done things a lot and I knew how they (the other linemen) worked. This year, I haven't really played with these guys, but I know how they play. I've watched them, and I know how they've been executing," said Heskew. "I think watching them do what they do will help me to fit back into the group a whole lot better and get things going well."

From what he has seen, Heskew expects the 1998 offensive line to be as physical as its immediate predecessors. "I definitely think it can be," he said. "We've got some strong guys out there."

"Julch is big, and 'Schwabby' is real strong. A couple of us need to work on some strength, including myself. But we're physical. We'll take it at someone. Until they stop us, we're going to keep taking it at them. That's our mindset when we play offensive line. That's our game, to be physical and mow people down."

Establishing the run was the key to Nebraska's offense under coach Tom Osborne and that won't change under Solich. The success of players such as **Bobby Newcombe** and **DeAngelo Evans** will depend in large measure on those up front. "The way offensive linemen look at it is, we go out there and execute, do the best job we can, and when that happens, we're going to produce as a team," Heskew said.

Heskew speaks from experience. He's been at it a long time, when he's been healthy. His back problems were a result of "getting hit wrong, getting hit over and over, getting fat, getting old," he said with a laugh. ■



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DEFENSIVE TACKLE

Jason Wiltz is from "way down yonder in New Orleans," to quote song lyrics. He grew up there, where the summer heat can be so intense "you feel like you're shrinking," he said.

"In the summertime it's rough. It's extremely hot, and the humidity is something else. It gets up in the high 90s, with 100-percent humidity. So you're sweating."

Wiltz hasn't missed that in Nebraska. What he has missed, however, is the opportunity to go salt-water fishing. In fact, "that's the thing I probably miss the most," he said.

There's plenty of salt water just to the north of New Orleans. Wiltz lived a mile and a half from Lake Ponchartrain, an extension of the Gulf of Mexico.

Wiltz enjoys eating the fish he catches, particularly speckled trout, which "is the easiest to prepare. It's good fish, nice white meat. I enjoy Cajun food, Creole food, all that stuff."

That he likes to eat is apparent from his size — 6-foot-4 and 310 pounds. By the start of his final season at Nebraska, however, he plans to lose between 10 and 15 pounds. "Wiltzy moves good," Cornhusker defensive coordinator Charlie McBride said during spring practice.

"But he can really move when he's about 300."

Wiltz can be a little lighter this season after moving to defensive tackle. Last season he played nosetackle, a position at which a little extra bulk can sometimes be useful.

"You don't get double-teamed as much playing tackle," Wiltz said.

"Usually, the nose plays on the strong side of the defense, so the guard picks up the nose along with the center and leaves the tackle free with the other guard. So you have more freedom to pass rush and stuff like that."

Wiltz alternated with junior Steve Warren at nosetackle last season, starting 10 games alongside All-American Jason Peter, who was a first-round draft choice of the Carolina Panthers.

Wiltz and Warren, who remains at nose, are the only experienced players at a position with little depth following the dismissal of Derek Allen and Brandon Drum and the decision by Ross Tessendorf to move on after finishing his degree, despite having a season of eligibility remaining.

Sophomore Loran Kaiser, who has increased his weight to between 275 and 280, was a pleasant surprise during spring

practice and figures prominently in McBride's plans this fall.

Junior Bobby Gill and sophomore Luis Almanzar are developing.

But incoming scholarship freshmen Jason Lohr, Jon Clanton and Jeremy Slechta will get a good look during preseason practice, with one, or all, avoiding a redshirt.

"The door's open, I guess, for everybody," said Wiltz. "We're going to have to get some guys ready in a hurry. Some of them have got to step up and show what they can do."

McBride is even more adamant about that. "We'll just have to coach the heck out of the younger guys," he said. "They'll get a quick chance. They'll get indoctrinated real fast."

Warren, who started twice last season, has "the kind of potential power that Danny Noonan had," McBride told the *Lincoln Journal Star* during the spring.

Noonan earned All-America honors at middle guard in 1986.

Warren "is one of the most promising young defensive tackles I've ever had at Nebraska," said McBride. "He's one of those young people who maybe didn't know how much hard work it takes to be great. But he's coming out of his shell and is doing the work, putting in the effort."

That's important if the Cornhuskers are to meet the standard set last season.



Jon Waller

Jon Waller

Reserves Bobby Gill (77) and Loran Kaiser (91) got their feet in the "wide open" door that exists at the back-up defensive tackle positions where only Steve Warren and Jason Wiltz return with any big-game experience.

Ryan Soderlin

OUTLOOK

NOSETACKLE Returning

Steve Warren
Bobby Gill

Lost

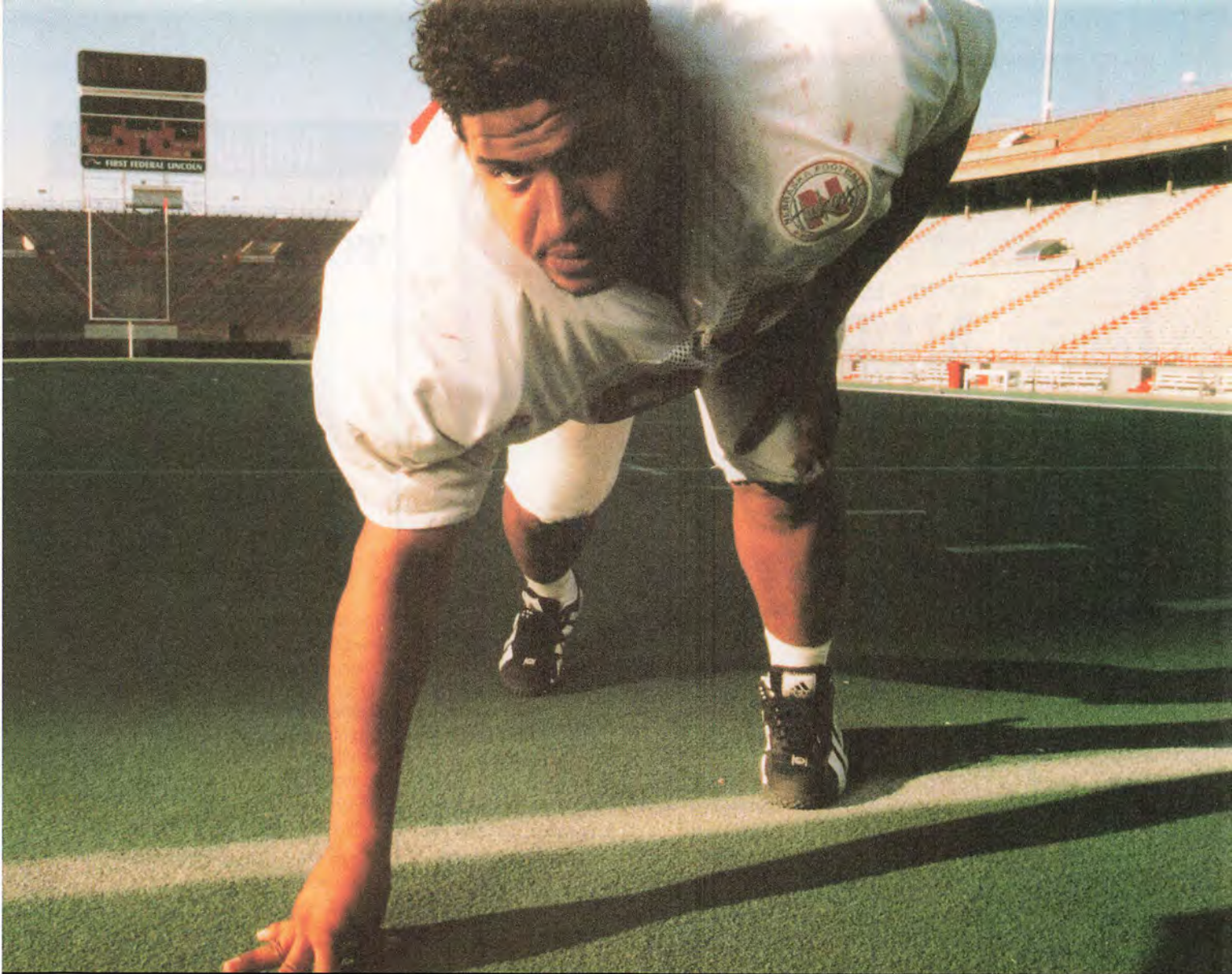
Brandon Drum
Ross Tessendorf

TACKLE Returning

Jason Wiltz
Loran Kaiser

Lost

Jason Peter
Derek Allen
Tom Millus



Before feasting on guards next season, tackle Jason Wiltz plans to slim down (10 to 15 pounds) over the summer with healthy portions of Louisiana trout.

Nebraska ranked fifth nationally in total defense and third nationally against the run, allowing only 73.4 yards on the ground per game, the lowest average in school history.

Regardless of who else steps up in preseason practice, he, Warren and Kaiser will give the Cornhuskers a solid interior, Wiltz said. "No matter what happens, we will be ready."

McBride's preference, of course, would be to have players three deep at both tackle spots. But, in a pinch, Wiltz has the experience to back up Warren at nosetackle.

"Generally, it's the same thing," Wiltz said of the two positions. "I came in as a defensive tackle, and when I started getting bigger, they moved me to nose. So basically I feel back at home now."

"That's what I played in high school, defensive tackle. But I can play both."

As with the other seniors, Wiltz has consciously assumed a leadership role.

"We have to step up and show leadership," he said. "Mostly, it's leading by example, hustling to the ball, being aggressive and always giving your best shot. If you lead by example, if you're making plays and giving a good effort, that's when people are going to listen to you."

"Then you can be a rah-rah type of player. But first of all, you've got to get it done on the field for anybody to listen to you or respect your opinion."

Wiltz respects McBride's opinion, of course.

Said Wiltz: "Every now and then he asks me, 'How much do you weigh?' He's like, 'Well, you know what you've got to get down to. I want you between 290 and 300. That's your best playing weight.'

"I tell him, 'I agree.' It's no big deal. That's what I want to do anyhow."

He plans to shed the weight during the summer. He also plans to do some fishing, preferably of the salt-water kind in Lake Pontchartrain, "speckled trout, redfish, stuff like that." ■



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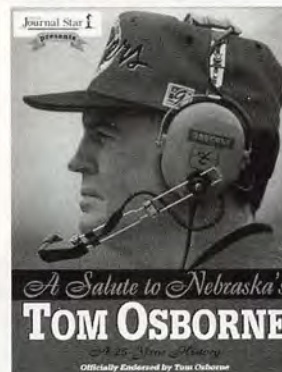
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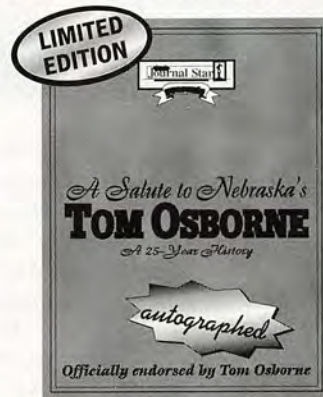
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what if I get transferred?



what if?



what if?



what if?

what if I block the plate?



what if she needs a specialist?

what if I catch a cold?



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RUSH END

Chad Kelsay had occasional flashbacks during spring practice. He would see a jersey number and associate it with the player who wore the number last season, or the season before.

When he'd see jersey No. 30, he'd immediately think of **Ahman Green**, even though Green was no longer at Nebraska — John Vann, a walk-on fullback, wore No. 30 in the spring.

"That's hard to get used to," said Kelsay, a senior and the starting left rush end.

"Every time you look, you see the number first. I mean, it's not the same body physique or anything, but you see the number and it takes a little while to get that out of your mind."

Getting accustomed to new players in familiar jersey numbers is even more difficult when you played alongside them, Kelsay said. "You look and there's a 98 and then a 55 . . ."

No player wore **Grant Wistrom's** No. 98 in the spring. But **Russ Hochstein**, a sophomore offensive guard, wore **Jason Peter's** No. 55. And Hochstein's being on offense didn't make it easier.

The flashbacks likely will continue in the fall. "It's going to be weird," Kelsay said.

The numerical confusion is understandable, particularly considering the significant roles Wistrom and Peter played in last season's run to a third national championship in four years.

"Their leadership is going to be missed a lot," Kelsay said. "But it's just like every year. Somebody else is going to step up, and hopefully we're going to have the leadership we did last year."

Kelsay, like Wistrom, has played without redshirting a season. Last year, he alternated with **Mike Rucker**, another senior, on the right side, starting 10 games and earning third-team All-Big 12 recognition from the conference coaches. Kelsay made 34 tackles, including seven for losses totaling 40 yards, and three quarterback sacks. He also had 14 quarterback hurries, fourth on the team behind Wistrom, Peter and Rucker.

Despite the departure of Wistrom, Nebraska again will be strong at the position.

When healthy, Rucker has big-play ability comparable to Wistrom's. Last season he had 15 tackles for losses totaling 70 yards and 7.5 sacks, as well as 15 quarterback hurries.

Rucker, who also broke up four passes and caused one fumble, has a big-play mindset. "Sometimes I feel like . . . I don't know, it's like maybe I have that power or something," he said.

"I just really try to make that play extra, extra hard to give that momentum boost.

"It's not that I don't want to make the play every down. It's like certain times where you would like to be the one to try to give the defense and the team a momentum boost. I try to do that. Sometimes it happens, and it makes you feel good."

Rush ends coach Nelson Barnes was able to get a good look at the backups during the spring, and he liked what he saw. Sophomore **Kyle Vanden Bosch**, who also was slowed by injury, and senior **Travis Toline** have some experience. Junior **Aaron Wills** and sophomore **Brandon Mooberry** are learning.

With Kelsay and Rucker, rush end will again be a high-profile position on defense. That's understandable given the Cornhuskers' attacking 4-3 base defense.

"Our position is just such an outgoing position," Kelsay said. "I mean, we make a lot of plays. We're in a position where we can make a lot of things happen. That, in turn, translates into leadership."

Kelsay has been through the football wars. He's played alongside the best, including All-Americans such as Peter, Wistrom and **Jared Tomich**, who completed his eligibility in 1996.

Kelsay is just now getting used to seeing the No. 93 Tomich wore on someone else. What's made it a little harder is Mooberry now wears that number.

It went from one rush end to another. It's weird how that works. ■

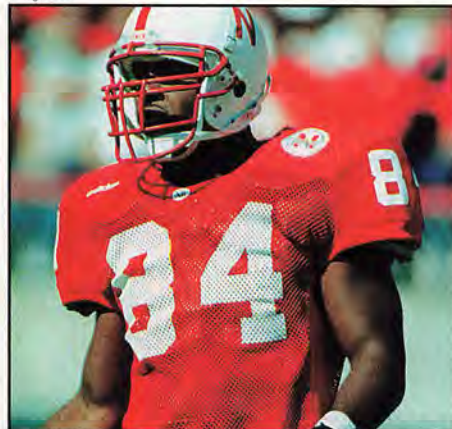
Bob Beauvois



Kyle Vanden Bosch (83), who will back up Kelsay this fall, saw action in every game last season as a true freshman.

In 12 games last season, Mike Rucker was second only to Wistrom, who he backed up, in tackles for loss with 15 for 67 yards.

Doug DeVoe



OUTLOOK

LEFT RUSH Returning

Chad Kelsay
Kyle Vanden Bosch
Brandon Mooberry

RIGHT RUSH Returning

Mike Rucker
Travis Toline
Aaron Wills

Lost

Grant Wistrom
Curt Lenner

As a senior who has played since his freshman season, Chad Kelsay (57) understands what it takes to be a leader on the field — a role that his mentor, Grant Wistrom, filled last season.

LINEBACKER

Had it not been for his mom, **Eric Johnson** probably wouldn't be playing football at Nebraska. The Cornhuskers' senior weakside linebacker might not be playing college football at all.

When he was "six or seven," Johnson said, he began telling his mom he would one day go to college and play football. That two-fold commitment was a promise, really, which kept him going after his mom, Freeda, died as a result of breast cancer during his first year at Nebraska.

Johnson sat out that first year because he had come up short of NCAA freshman eligibility requirements. He couldn't practice, much less play, and his grades "weren't doing so hot at the time," he said. He went home to Phoenix at Christmas and saw his mother for the last time.

"She died toward the beginning of second semester. Nobody even knew (about the cancer). I think she kind of knew, but she didn't want to tell anybody because she didn't want us to be hurt. She didn't want us to know what was going on. She knew I would have tried to come back and be with her."

After her death, "I thought about giving it up," said Johnson.

With the "spiritual guidance" of former Cornhusker coach Tom Osborne and assistants Ron Brown and Craig Bohl, however, Johnson decided to stay. "I made it all this way," he said.

Johnson replaces **Octavious McFarlin** as the starter after being a backup for two seasons. He's among Nebraska's fastest linebackers, with personal bests of 1.52 in the 10-yard dash and 4.43 in the 40.

He was the Cornhuskers' seventh-leading tackler last season with 49, including seven for losses totaling 29 yards and three sacks. He also was credited with four quarterback hurries.

Johnson started the Kansas State game when McFarlin was sidelined by an ankle sprain, and his best game came against Iowa State when he registered nine tackles, including two for losses of 13 yards.

Despite the personal adversity, Johnson has remained upbeat, earning a reputation for being among the most outgoing Cornhuskers. "I'm a smiley kind of guy," he said. "I get that from my mom."

Linebacker is a smiley kind of position for Nebraska, with five of the top six returning. The only newcomer is junior **Julius Jackson** who emerged in the spring as Johnson's backup.

Like Johnson, Jackson has finally found a home at weakside linebacker, after having tried at rush end, strongside linebacker and middle linebacker.

"Julius is relaxed and playing with more self-confidence," Cornhusker defensive coordinator Charlie McBride said in the spring. "He has everything you're looking for in a linebacker."

"Julius has been on the edge for the last year as far as turning into a great player."

Senior middle linebacker **Jay Foreman** already has established himself as a great player and is being counted on to provide leadership on the defense after a junior season in which he was second on the team in tackles with 61, including five for losses, and 1.5 sacks. He also had nine quarterback hurries.

He was a second-team All-Big 12 selection by The Associated Press and despite having been a starter for two seasons, and a regular for three, Foreman didn't let up in the spring. "A lot of times, you might worry about senioritis when a guy has started a lot and is going through his last spring," Bohl, his position coach, told the *Lincoln Journal Star*.

"Not Jay. He is probably more intense this spring than I've ever seen him."

Foreman's backup, sophomore **Carlos Polk**, would be starting for most teams.

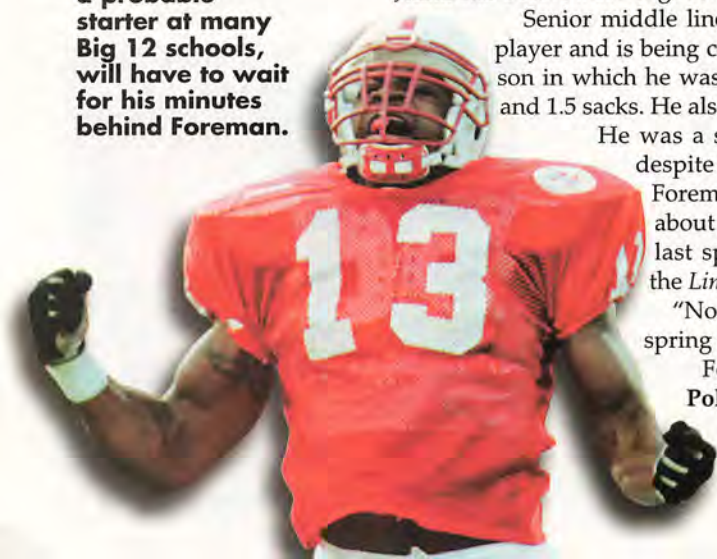
Polk, who was slowed by an ankle injury during spring practice, was

Without much hype, Jay Foreman has become one of the best middle linebackers in the country.



Jon Waller

Nebraska is so deep at linebacker that sophomore Carlos Polk (13), a probable starter at many Big 12 schools, will have to wait for his minutes behind Foreman.



OUTLOOK

STRONGSIDE

Returning

Tony Ortiz
Brian Shaw
Rod Baker
Quint Hogrefe

MIDDLE

Returning

Jay Foreman
Carlos Polk
Ben Buettenback
Jamie Burrow

WEAKSIDE

Returning

Eric Johnson
Julius Jackson
Josh Kohl

Lost

Octavious McFarlin

Earning the start at weakside linebacker was easy compared to some of the odds Eric Johnson has already beaten in his life.



credited with 32 tackles last season, including six for losses of 24 yards, and one sack. He also caused two fumbles.

His size and strength make him a perfect fit in the "bubble" defense.

Nebraska also is set at strongside linebacker, where juniors **Tony Ortiz** and **Brian Shaw** alternated last season, and will do so again. They made 60 tackles between them, including 11 for 58 yards in losses, broke up four passes and were credited with nine quarterback hurries and 4.5 sacks.

Ortiz recovered two fumbles. Shaw broke up three passes and forced an interception.

Even though they've established themselves, none of the linebackers

can relax, of course. Johnson quickly learned that lesson soon after gaining his eligibility in 1996.

"With our program, when you first come in, they push you to your limit of emotions," he said. "They break your emotions down, and then they build you back up. It kind of humbles you."

After sitting out a year, however, he was determined to succeed.

"I kind of used that year as motivation," said Johnson, who began as a cornerback but was immediately moved to weakside linebacker, where he was described as a **Terrell Farley**-type player.

Even though he couldn't practice, Johnson never missed a home game in 1995. Sitting in the stands and watch-

ing was both difficult and exciting, Johnson said. "When the team came out and the music was playing and you see the crowd, everybody in red. I had never seen anything like that at a game.

"I knew I was going to have to be a part of that one day."

Because of that experience, Johnson has taken it on himself to offer encouragement to young players. "I don't want them to think: 'This is how it's going to be forever,'" he said.

"But you've got to want it. You've got to want to play."

He wanted it, and got encouragement early on from older players such as Farley, **Jon Hesse**, **Tony Veland** and **Mike Minter**. "That's the tradition here, and we keep it going," Johnson said. "We teach the younger guys, give the younger guys confidence. There's no jealousy. That surprised me."

Players, even ones as fast as he is, have to adjust to the speed of the game, which also surprised him. "When you first come out of high school — and see, I sat out a year — you remember how it was in high school. It seems like it's slow motion, and you're able to see things a lot quicker," he said.

"Here things just explode. Everything is passing you, and you don't know what's going on. But as you go through practice and you run drills and stuff, it just helps you. It becomes second nature."

Johnson's No. 1 jersey is one of many reminders of his mom. He began with jersey No. 33, but wanted a single-digit number. His preference was No. 4, the number his cousin, Jamelle Holieway, wore at Oklahoma. But McFarlin already had jersey No. 4, so Johnson settled for No. 1.

"My mother always used to say: 'You're No. 1.' So I just went with it," he said.

Johnson has a more permanent reminder of his mom on his right arm — a tattoo of opera faces on the biceps and one of his mom's name on the forearm. He got the tattoos soon after she died.

One of the faces represents "the death of my mother," Johnson said.

The other represents "the pain I feel for her. My tattoos are my good luck."

Freda Johnson never got to see her son play for Nebraska. "But I know she's watching from up above," he said. "I just thank the Lord that I'm able to do the things I'm able to do on the field." ■

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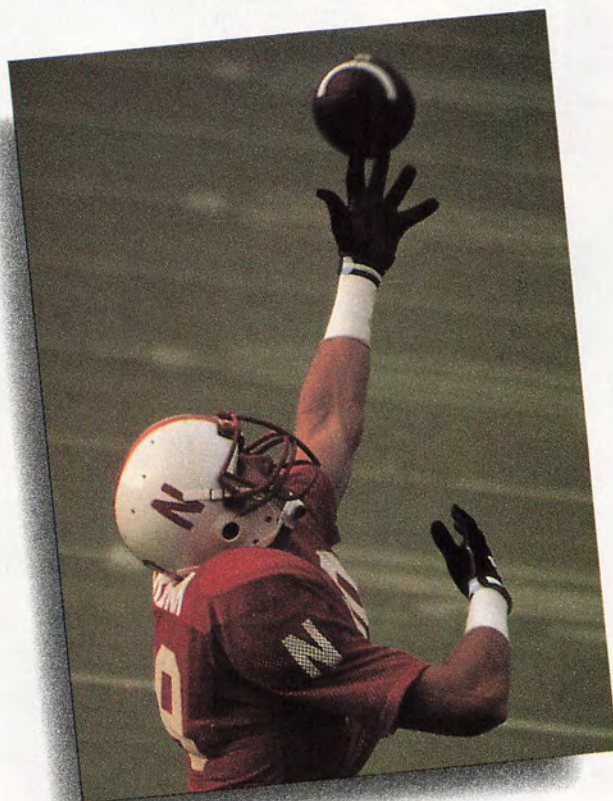
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SECONDARY

Dion Booker made the trip to Washington last season. He was included on Nebraska's travel roster, even though "I didn't really think I was going to play," he said.

Booker had decided he would redshirt his first collegiate season. "They just took me up there for a safety net," he said. "But you never know, I guess."

Even though Booker would have forfeited the redshirt had he played against the Huskies, the Cornhuskers were concerned about depth at free safety behind Eric Warfield.

Clint Finley, the top backup, was recovering from a dislocated elbow which he suffered in the second scrimmage of fall camp. The injury had kept him out of the first two games.

Finley might have been able to play in a pinch. As it turned out, however, he didn't have to. And neither did Booker, who was able to remain an interested spectator — and retain his redshirt.

Early on in fall camp last season it appeared Booker might be among the freshmen who didn't redshirt. There were six who played: quarterback-wingback **Bobby Newcombe**, split end **Matt Davison**, I-back **Correll Buckhalter**, rush end **Kyle Vanden Bosch**, cornerback **Erwin Swiney** and rover **Joe Walker**.

Booker could have been the seventh. "Basically, it was my decision to redshirt," he said. "Physically, I thought I was there. But mentally, I just didn't think I was well prepared."

By spending a season on the sideline preparing instead of playing, Booker reasoned, he could learn "what the coaches want," he said. "Not just be guessing what they want, but know."

In retrospect, he benefitted from the redshirt, although at times during this spring, he got discouraged. "It's like I'm a step behind everything," he said. "Sometimes I feel comfortable and sometimes I feel like I'm out of it or something."

"I'm rusty, and you've got to get a lot more repetition. During the spring, you don't get, I don't think, really as much (repetition) as you want because everybody is fighting for positions."

Booker began his redshirt season on the scout team. After the first two games, however, when the team was preparing for Washington, "they put me up with the ones and twos," he said.

"I didn't get any reps. But I felt it was a good learning experience," he said. "You're up there with the ones and twos, and you're watching them make calls, and you've got **Eric Warfield** out there leading them and everything. Even though you don't get the full experience by watching, it's still

good. It gives you an idea of what techniques to use.

"It got to the point that if someone messed up, like maybe he was supposed to squeeze or man-to-man a receiver and he didn't, I picked up on it. 'You should have done this or that.' I was learning. Coach was correcting them, and I was learning, too, at the same time. That helped a lot."

Knowing what to do is essential for a safety. It's a difficult position for a young player to master. What made it even more difficult was the fact that Booker expected to be a cornerback like his brother, Mike.

"My mom was set on (my playing) corner when Nebraska was recruiting me," he said. "But people were telling me when I got here, 'You're pretty big. They're going to move you to safety.'"

Booker, who is 6-foot-1 and 205 pounds, was immediately moved.

"You've got to learn everybody's position, basically. You've got to have a lot of key reads," Booker said. "There's a lot at safety you've got to pay attention to, not just your stuff but everybody else's stuff, too, because if someone makes a mistake, you've got to cover up sometimes."

Veterans Ralph (left) and Mike Brown are jumping at the chance to prove to offenses that NU's secondary is no longer a soft spot.

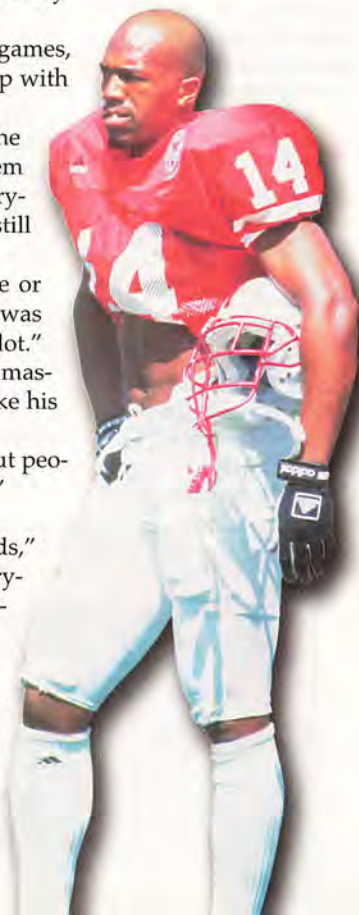
Booker finished spring practice sharing the No. 2 position with redshirted freshman **Troy Watchhorn** and junior **Greg McGraw**, both of whom are walkons.

Finley, a sophomore with the reputation for being one of the hardest hitters on the team, is the only new starter in a

See **SECONDARY** page 58



Free safety, the only secondary position which doesn't return a starter from '97, will be in the capable hands of sophomore Clint Finley (above) and freshman Dion Booker (14).



OUTLOOK

LEFT CORNER

Returning

Erwin Swiney

Khari Reynolds

Jeff Hemje

Lost

Brandon Harrison

FREE SAFETY

Returning

Clint Finley

Dion Booker

Troy Watchhorn

Greg McGraw

Lost

Eric Warfield

ROVER

Returning

Mike Brown

Joe Walker

Brandon Quindt

Gregg List

RIGHT CORNER

Returning

Ralph Brown

Frankie London

Jerome Peterson

Josh Anderson

Lost

Jason Benes

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kris Brown has stepped in to play quarterback on the scout team during practice. He has stepped in to play wide receiver. And he has stepped in to play defensive back.

He has accepted each role without hesitation, if not eagerly. "I've always made myself available and let it be known that I would do anything I can to help the team," he said.

"For me that's the most important thing. It's not what I go out and do on Saturday or it's not what the next person goes out and does on Saturday because if we have individual guys who go out and play well and the team doesn't do well, it doesn't really matter. I think it's important that as a group of individuals we all do what's necessary to help the team get better every single day in practice.

"Hopefully, by getting better in practice, we'll get better on Saturday and play well."

Brown expresses that philosophy with the sincerity and enthusiasm of a motivational speaker.

And, as indicated earlier, he's quick to practice what he preaches.

The senior place-kicker from Southlake, Texas, will be among Nebraska's leaders in 1998, in spite of his position. Place-kickers and punters "don't do a whole lot in practice," Brown said.

"In fact, we sit around the majority of practice. So I try to lead by what I do on the field. I just make sure I get my job done and show everybody that's what a leader is supposed to do.

"I don't think necessarily that in order to be a leader you have to be the type of guy who hoots and hollers and screams and yells. You can be the quietest person on the field but yet play a significant role in terms of leadership. I think that's a role I can kind of see myself taking."

Brown has gotten his job done with extraordinary efficiency the past three seasons.

He holds Nebraska career records for points scored by a kicker (299), field goals (43) and extra points (170). As a junior, he set school single-season records in each of those categories, making 18-of-21 field goals and 62-of-62 extra points for 116 combined points.

The 62 extra-point kicks tied the school single-season record, and Brown has been successful on 73 consecutive extra-point kicks over two seasons, 11 short of breaking the career record.

He missed three of his first five field-goal attempts last season, then nailed 16 in a row, yet another school record. He was 5-of-6 on field-goal attempts of 40 yards or more.

The slow start "really taught me a whole lot about being patient and it taught me a lot about, particularly when I go out and attempt a field goal, how to prepare for that mentally," said Brown.

During spring practice, Brown tried to help senior **Bill Lafleur** develop a similar confidence.

Lafleur, a walkon from Norfolk (Catholic High), Neb., is heir apparent to **Jesse Kosch** as Nebraska's punter. Lafleur, like Brown, was a high school quarterback and scored well in post-winter conditioning tests. They both ran the 40-yard dash in under 4.6 seconds and had 30-inch vertical jumps.

But Lafleur is as inexperienced as Brown is experienced. He punted only once last season.

That's why, during the spring, **See SPECIAL TEAMS page 58**

Kris Brown has rewritten the place-kicking section of the Cornhusker record book, and should continue to revise it during his senior season.



Senior Bill Lafleur may be inexperienced at punting, but there is no doubting his confidence.



New faces on special teams this fall will be holder Frankie London (1) and snapper Dominic Raiola (54).



[London, Raiola] Doug Davis

OUTLOOK

PLACE-KICKER

Returning

Kris Brown
Dan Hadenfeldt
Chace Long

Lost

Ted Retzlaff

PUNTER

Returning

Bill Lafleur
Dan Hadenfeldt
Brian Morro

Lost

Jesse Kosch

KICK-OFF RETURNER

Returning

Shevin Wiggins
Joe Walker
Kenny Cheatham

PUNT RETURNER

Returning

Lance Brown
Shevin Wiggins
Joe Walker

HOLDER

Returning

Frankie London
Eric Crouch

Lost

Ted Retzlaff

SNAPPER

Returning

Dominic Raiola
Tracey Wistrom

Lost

Kyle Henson
Brandon Drum



SPECIAL TEAMS

From page 56

Brown was quick to offer encouragement. "I think it builds confidence," he said. "I know how I felt when I came in as a freshman and I didn't know what it was going to be like. It just helped me when people would reassure me or tell me I had done something good."

By late in the spring, Lafleur seemed to be feeling good about himself.

"We will take on any combination of kicker and punter in the country in any sport and beat them," he told the *Lincoln Journal Star*. "Obviously, kicking and punting are the most important part, but Kris Brown and I will take on any other kicker and punter in basketball, golf, whatever."

Lafleur's challenge was evidence of his enthusiasm and competitiveness.

In addition to providing encouragement for Lafleur in the spring, Brown had to become accustomed to a new deep snapper, **Dominic Raiola**, and a new holder, **Frankie London**.

The snapper and holder were Brown's first concern, in fact, because his success depends on them. "It's important we get some continuity in those positions, that we kind of gel," he said.

Raiola, a redshirt freshman and back-up center, replaces **Kyle Henson**. London, a junior wingback/corner, replaces **Ted Retzlaff**, for whom he was the back-up holder last season.

Brown came away from spring practice with confidence in both players.

That wasn't a surprise. "Dominic had snapped in high school, and when he came in as a freshman last fall, he snapped the ball and we could tell he had some talent there," said Brown.

The deep snapper has to "get the ball back there in a good amount of time, an efficient amount of time," Brown said. "But more importantly, I think, the key is to be consistent in where he puts the ball every time, in terms of where he puts the ball for the holder. Dominic will do a great job."

So will London, who "came in kind of as a veteran holder," said Brown.

"People take for granted the holding position. They forget how important it is. It's really a key part of the kicking game. And Frankie has done a great job. He's got great hands."

Senior wingback **Shevin Wiggins** was the busiest punt returner last season, averaging 11.6 yards on 19 returns. Sophomore **Bobby Newcombe** was the most productive punt returner, averaging 20.3 yards and scoring one touchdown. But his switch to quarterback will probably preclude his returning punts.

Wiggins and sophomore rover **Joe Walker** were the top two kick-off returners last season, averaging 27.0 yards and 25.9 yards per return, respectively, and give the Cornhuskers experience there.

Brown, who also can serve as the back-up punter, might be considered a special teams leader. Not only is he willing to contribute on the scout team during practice, but he also has the experience of having played an important role in Nebraska's last two national championship seasons.

It seems like only yesterday he was setting place-kicking records as a true freshman on the 1995 national championship team. And now his Cornhusker career is nearing an end. ■

SECONDARY

From page 55

secondary without a senior listed among the top 15.

Even so, secondary coach George Darlington has an experienced group.

As a result, "there's no more Mr. Nice Guy from 'Coach D' anymore," No. 1 right cornerback **Ralph Brown** told the *Lincoln Journal Star*. "He knows he can ask for more and he doesn't have to say, 'That's OK' when we make a mistake because we're new to the defense."

Brown, a junior, is a two-year starter and a leader in the secondary. He was a consensus first-team All-Big 12 selection last season, making 29 tackles and intercepting two passes. He also broke up nine passes, giving him 21 in two seasons — a Cornhusker career record.

Mike Brown, also a junior, returns at rover, after a season in which he led Nebraska in tackles with 77, including four for losses. He broke up four passes and intercepted two.

Mike Brown earned second-team All-Big 12 honors from conference coaches. He's an outstanding tackler and hits with force comparable to that of Finley's, according to Booker.

"Mike . . . I can't even explain it," Booker said. "He just does it nice; everything is just perfect with him, all the form, coming up and hitting. He hits people hard, even though he doesn't knock 'em out like Clint. I guess maybe Clint has more power. When he hits someone, he really hits them."

Mike Brown, like Ralph Brown, has assumed a leadership role, said Booker.

"They never let up. If you do something wrong, they're going to tell you. If you do something right, they're going to compliment you," Booker said. "Right when we strap on our helmets and our pads, they're out there running around like every practice is a game, every play, everything, correcting their mistakes and trying to correct everybody else's mistakes, bringing the secondary together."

The greatest concern during the spring was sophomore cornerback Swiney, who was sidelined by a groin injury. Swiney, who started nine games on the left side as a true freshman last season, is expected to be ready in the fall. Sophomore **Khari Reynolds** stepped up in his absence to bolster the position.

Reynolds, who began his career as a wide receiver, was a pleasant surprise in the spring.

With Walker, another sophomore who played as a true freshman, the Cornhuskers are two-deep at rover. Walker, the "nickel" back, played in every game last season and started one.

Junior **Jerome Peterson**, a backup on the right side, started the first three games at left cornerback last season before Swiney won the job. **Frankie London**, who has moved from quarterback, could also be a backup if he decides his best chance of seeing action is on defense.

London could also see time at wide receiver.

By the end of spring practice, it seemed like the veterans were comfortable with the newcomers. The secondary drew closer together as the days went by.

"When we're out on the field, everybody's looking out for everybody," Booker said. "There aren't any individuals, no one person who's going to go out there and try to do everything. They depend on us. We depend on them. It's like a family." ■



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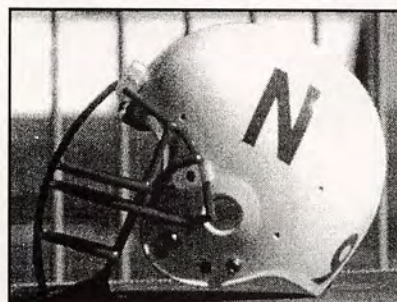
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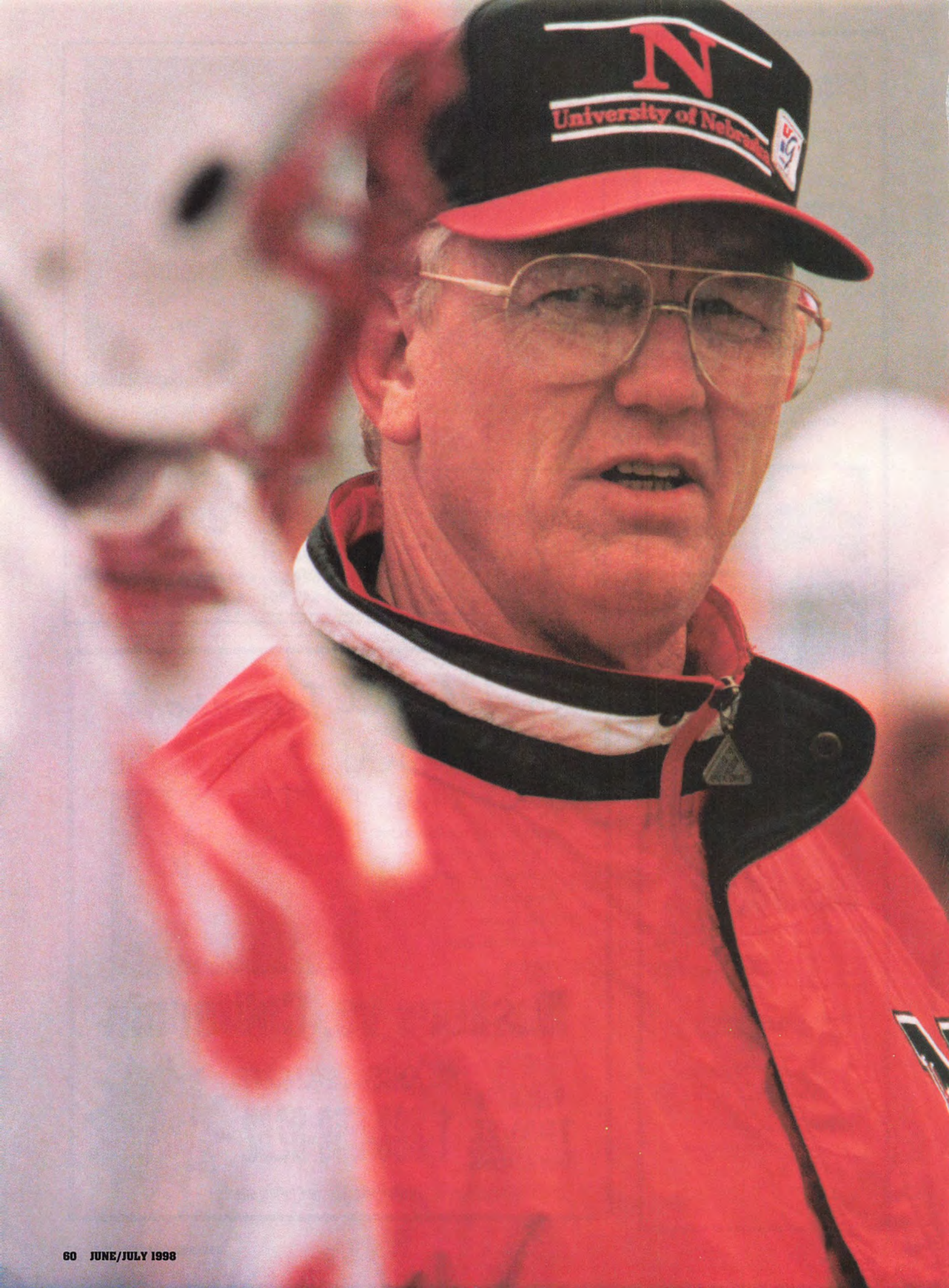


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The KING Of PAIN

Behind Defensive Coordinator Charlie McBride And His 4-3 Attack, Nebraska Is Hurting Teams With Something Other Than Offense

By Mike Babcock

VARIETY MIGHT BE the spice of life, but it can be anathema to a defensive coordinator. Each week during the football season is a "whole new episode," Charlie McBride has said.

One week, Nebraska's defensive coordinator might have to prepare for an offense directed by a dropback passer. The next, he might have to devise a plan for stopping the option.

Offenses are "doing so many things, becoming more multiple," he said. "People are throwing in so many different things with their personnel, becoming more sophisticated."

As a result, the defense must be able to adapt. It must accept the timeless wisdom of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who wrote: "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds."

And, McBride might add, such resistance to change can get you beat.

The defense never rests, not if it is to be successful. Change is constant from one season to the next as well as from one game to the next. "A lot of times you change the whole thing if it hasn't been successful in the past," McBride said following the Cornhuskers' first major scrimmage this spring.

"What you try to do is change the things that weren't good for you, or you try to eliminate the things that didn't do so well, after looking at all the cut-ups and the statistics of the different defenses."

The defense was a key component in Nebraska's winning the *USA Today*/ESPN coaches' national championship last season, of course. The Cornhuskers ranked fifth nationally in total defense and 12th in scoring defense, allowing averages of 257.3 yards and 16.4 points per game.

Nebraska was particularly effective against the run, allowing only 73.4 yards per game on the ground, a school record and third-best nationally. Opponents managed only 2.2 yards per carry.

The cornerstone of the Cornhuskers' defensive philosophy is stopping the run.

Nebraska has ranked among the nation's top 10 in rushing defense seven times since McBride succeeded Lance Van Zandt as defensive coordinator in

1982, and the Cornhuskers have ranked in the top 10 nationally in total defense and scoring defense 10 times during that stretch.

The last four seasons they have ranked from second to fifth nationally against the run, allowing more than 80 yards per game only once; in 1996, they gave up 83.8 yards to rank fifth.

Nebraska's extraordinary success against the run has coincided with the change to a 4-3 base defense, which was designed to cope with the pass-oriented offenses that contributed to a seven-game losing streak in bowls, beginning with the 31-28 loss against Florida State in the 1988 Fiesta Bowl.

Seminole quarterback Danny McManus completed 28-of-51 passes for 375 yards and three touchdowns, a somewhat typical passing performance during the streak.

Miami's Steve Walsh was 23-of-48 for 285 yards and two touchdowns in a 23-3 Nebraska loss in the 1989 Orange Bowl game, and Florida State's Peter Tom Willis was 25-of-41 for 422 yards and five touchdowns in a 41-17 victory against the Cornhuskers in the 1990 Fiesta Bowl game.

On the average in those seven games, Nebraska's opponents completed 22-of-40 passes for 302 yards, while rushing for only 123 yards. The rushing yardage was distorted to some extent by Florida State's 221 yards rushing in its 27-14 victory against Nebraska in the 1993 Orange Bowl.

Those 221 yards were more than one-fourth of the rushing total against Nebraska in the seven bowl games. In four of the games, Cornhusker opponents rushed for fewer than 100 yards.

Nebraska's switch in defensive philosophy came about as a result of the realization that it was holding up against the run even when it went to a "nickel" package in apparent passing situations.

The second half of the Oklahoma game in 1993 provided a dramatic illustration. Nebraska shut down the Sooners' running game in the second half, relying almost exclusively on a "nickel" defense.

Following the 1993 season, what had been situational became the standard.

That the Cornhuskers have won three national championships in the past four seasons after switching to a 4-3 base defense is not coincidence. Rather, it's evidence of the importance of change.

Nebraska's defensive coaches aren't

complacent. As is the case every off-season, "you add something," said McBride. "We've spent some time going around and looking at different things."

McBride regularly shares ideas with other coaches, among them former Cornhusker defensive coordinator Monte Kiffin, now an assistant for the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and Mickey Andrews, the veteran defensive coordinator at Florida State and a longtime McBride friend.

tions on variations. In the first major scrimmage this spring, McBride focused on running the base defense.

"You've got a list of 25 or 30 defenses," he said. "If you got them all in the scrimmage, it probably wouldn't help you, so you focus on certain things. We ran about five different blitzes, five pressure packages. A lot of times, it's called a blitz, but it's kind of run pressure; I guess it's a blitz."

"You might have one blitz, but you have different in-line stunts that you

You Can Run, But You Can't Hide

In college football, schemes and ideas come and go like fads. What's popular today will be yesterday's news by the time the ink on the new playbook dries. Looking to put up gaudy offensive numbers that attract national attention and votes of those involved in the polls, many teams have sold their souls to West Coast passing offenses. But if a team can't run, finding time to open up a passing attack is almost impossible — just ask Miami and Florida. Neither team was able to get on track against the run-stopping monster that **Charlie McBride** has in place at Nebraska. Since McBride arrived in Lincoln in 1982, the Huskers have ranked among the nation's top 10 in rushing defense seven times.

NU'S DEFENSIVE STATISTICS UNDER McBRIDE

YEAR	TOTAL YARDS	RUSH YARDS	PASS YARDS	PTS.
1982	290.6 (14)	125.5*	165.1	12.3 (5)
1983	368.3	149.4	218.9	15.5
1984	203.3* (1)	78.8 (4)	124.5*(5)	9.5 (1)
1985	279.1 (6)	121.2 (15)	157.9	12.4 (9)
1986	235.6 (2)	95.7 (9)	139.9 (11)	13.6 (7)
1987	264.7 (8)	107.0 (9)	157.7	12.1 (6)
1988	262.8* (7)	127.9*	134.8* (6)	15.2 (13)
1989	274.1* (8)	111.3*	162.8	15.8
1990	263.5* (7)	132.5	131.0* (11)	13.4 (7)
1991	342.9	137.8	205.1	18.9
1992	309.6	138.1	171.5	15.6 (13T)
1993	307.6* (12)	143.7*	163.9* (12)	16.0* (13T)
1994	258.8* (4)	79.3* (4)	179.6 (10)	12.1* (2)
1995	294.1 (13)	78.4* (2)	215.7	13.6 (4)
1996	255.4* (7)	83.8* (5)	171.6 (7)	12.8* (5)
1997	257.3 (5)	73.4* (3)	183.9 (32)	16.5 (13)

* Led Conference/(National Top 15 Rankings)

Then, during spring practice, "mostly what we try to do is get coverages and blitzes and things that might simplify things for us. There are so many different sets people are coming up with, so many different shifts and sets and things," McBride said. "It's a little bit like us (offensively)."

Some of the adjustments are designed to get a mental edge. "We show defenses to try to get the offense out of a play. That's the object of the thing," he said. "If they call a play, that's what they want to run. So if we can change the play, we're successful. They're not getting what they want."

Defenses, like offenses, are becoming increasingly complex, with varia-

run with that blitz. The coverage remains the same. But your in-line stunts or your linemen might be doing different things."

Nebraska's defense has gone from reading and reacting to attacking. The results have been dramatic. The Cornhuskers' ability to deal with the dropback passers who gave them bowl-game problems can be seen in the victories that completed their three national championship runs.

They sacked Miami's Frank Costa five times and intercepted him once in their 24-17 victory in the 1995 Orange Bowl game, and they sacked Florida's Danny Wuerffel seven times and intercepted him three times in their 62-24



victory in the 1996 Fiesta Bowl game.

The Hurricanes rushed for 29 yards; the Gators rushed for 28 yards in losses.

Nebraska sacked Tennessee's Peyton Manning only once in its 42-17 victory in the 1997 Orange Bowl game, but that was because Manning relied on a controlled, short-yardage passing offense, which produced 134 yards and one touchdown on 21-of-31 completions, with one interception.

What worked against Manning



won't work against quarterbacks such as Missouri's Corby Jones and Kansas State's Michael Bishop, who can tuck away the ball and run with it. "We're going to see a ton of that this year," said McBride. "You go all the way from one extreme to the other."

Quarterbacks who can run have become the standard in the Big 12. Among those besides Jones and Bishop are Oklahoma State's Tony Lindsay and B.J. Tiger, Oklahoma's Brandon Daniels and Baylor's Odell James. Even Colorado has a quarterback who can run in junior Jeremy Weisinger.

"Our whole conference is going more to the athletic quarterback who can cause you all kinds of problems as

far as running with the ball when he doesn't see people open," McBride said.

"The whole gamut has just about changed, from what I can see."

The trend is, in part, a reflection of the NFL, according to McBride.

"You look at the (Steve) Youngs and the (Joe) Montanas and those guys, who could all get back in the pocket, and John Elway . . . not only is he big and a pocket-passer, he also has speed and can get out of the pocket and run. So I think everybody's looking at the more athletic quarterbacks," he said.

"The reason is (that) people are recruiting speed more on defense and to counteract some of that speed, you need that athletic quarterback who can run the draw play and run when people are covered.

"A lot of people are going to more the athletic-type quarterback. There are still teams that just have pure throwers, just take the best thrower and if he's a runner, fine; they'll make something out of it. A lot of teams go with the philosophy that they want to get the best passer they can first."

But more and more teams are going to quarterbacks similar to those who have played for the Cornhuskers. "We go probably with the best runner first and passer second," said McBride.

Nebraska's success with quarterbacks such as Tommie Frazier and Scott Frost, no doubt, has influenced some Big 12 schools to recruit quarter-

That the Cornhuskers have won three national championships in the past four seasons after switching to a 4-3 base defense is not coincidence. Rather, it's evidence of the importance of change.

backs who can run. Their reasoning is that what has worked for the Cornhuskers will work for them. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

Nebraska used that philosophy to end Oklahoma's dominance.

During McBride's first four seasons as a Cornhusker assistant, Oklahoma won four of five games against Nebraska (one was a rematch in the 1979 Orange Bowl) and never threw more than eight passes.

The Sooners threw only 35 passes total, completing 14, in four consecutive victories against Nebraska from 1984 to 1987. Quarterbacks such as Thomas Lott, J.C. Watts, Danny Bradley and Jamelle Holieway were a source of considerable frustration for the Cornhusker defense during that time.

"They were a pain," said McBride. "That was the worst thing that could happen; they'd go back (to pass) and not find anybody and then run with it. You'd be chasing them all over the place.

"They made a lot of money on quarterbacks who couldn't find a receiver."

Jones and Bishop, both of whom are being promoted as Heisman Trophy candidates, are better passers than those Oklahoma quarterbacks of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Jones completed 12-of-20 passes for 233 yards and three touchdowns in last season's overtime thriller in Columbia.

The potential for a quarterback to run puts added pressure on the defense and has contributed to the need to make adjustments during the off-season. "You have blitzes where you're trying to come with heat up the middle on dropback (passers)," said McBride. "With guys who sprint out, you want blitzes coming from the outside. So you have to adjust your blitz package from week to week.

"We go through it and say: 'This one won't work, period. This is what

we want to do here.'

"So you take your whole package of blitzes and cut them down for each particular team, according to what kind of quarterback it is and what kind of pass actions they have.

"And, of course, what kind of running game they have."

Regardless of the type of quarterback, stopping the run is the key. That part of Nebraska's defensive philosophy hasn't changed. And won't.

Not all consistency is foolish. ■

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1998 PLAYER BIOS

Plenty has changed in Cornhusker football since last season, and we're not just talking about the head coach. This fall, when the starting lineups are announced prior to each Saturday's contest, many of the names will leave fans scrambling for their programs.

Losing 12 starters and 31 lettermen will induce that kind of confusion.

Gone are the mainstays of three national championships in **Grant Wistrom**, **Aaron Taylor** and **Jason Peter**, as well as the trigger man for last season's title team — **Scott Frost**. That senior class will be hard to replace as over the last four years it racked up an amazing 49-2 record, three conference championships and a perfect 25-0 record at home.

Nebraska is also looking for healthy bodies to fill the four holes left on the offensive line following the departures of **Fred Pollack**, **Jon Zatechka**, **Eric Anderson** and Taylor.

But in typical Nebraska fashion, there is no need to panic as the Huskers simply reload, not rebuild.

The fate of the Huskers' 1998 season and possible second-straight Big 12 crown will rest in the hands of players such as **Jason Schwab**, **Adam Julch**, **Bobby Newcombe**, **Eric Johnson** and **Clint Finley**. All saw action in 1997, but did not have to shoulder the responsibilities of carrying the team as they will this fall.

While there will be plenty of new faces in '98, there will also be plenty of old ones on a defense that returns seven starters and ample depth. The secondary, which was unsuccessfully picked on late last season by Colorado and Tennessee, boasts underclassmen in all four starting spots, including two juniors and two sophomores.

This season will also mark the return of **DeAngelo Evans**, who will attempt to rekindle the fire he displayed as a freshman in 1996 as well as fill the vast shoes of **Ahman Green**.

With that in mind, on the following pages we preview some of the players who will be responsible for making **Frank Solich's** transition from the pressbox to the sideline a success.

#38 Dan Alexander

**I-Back
6-0, 250, Soph.
Wentzville, Mo.**

Perhaps the most impressive physical specimen on the team, Alexander was voted by his teammates as Lifter of the Year last spring

Michael Warren



Dan ALEXANDER

and was a finalist for the award this year after recording the team's highest performance index during testing.

Alexander was impressive running the ball last spring before tearing his anterior cruciate ligament in the Red-White game. He recovered but played sparingly last fall. This spring, he showed signs of returning to his old self and will see plenty of time as a backup.

"I prayed for the confidence," Alexander said. "I have my legs back. I'm not afraid of hurting my knee, but I don't have the same mentality about running that I did last year. I was really frustrated. It was a trial for me. I felt stronger but seemed to get in a game or a scrimmage and doubt myself."

Charlie McBride, after watching Alexander in a spring scrimmage: "Alexander is back to where he's going to hurt people."

#51 Matt Baldwin

**Center
6-1, 290, Jr.
Arvada (Bear Creek), Colo.**

Baldwin spent the spring practicing with the No. 1 offense because starter Josh Heskew was sidelined, recovering from back surgery.

Because of Heskew's absence, Baldwin, Dominic Raiola and Aaron Havlovic had to participate in every snap of every practice — three centers, three practice stations.

"Honestly, I got a little tired by the end of practice," Baldwin said. "But I'm so wound up about getting the chance to be with the first team that I'm too happy to complain."

Baldwin appeared in seven games last season after playing in three in 1996. Coming out of high school, he took some heat for not choosing Colorado. However, he said, the Buffaloes didn't recruit him as hard as Nebraska, Colorado State and Hawaii. "No second thoughts about my choice," he said.

Milt Tenopir: "He played well this spring; we may look at him at guard in the fall."



#14 Dion Booker

**Free Safety
6-1, 205, Fr.
Oceanside (El Camino), Calif.**

Booker and 13 other 1997 Nebraska recruits sat out last season as redshirts. This season, Booker will play backup to Clint Finley.

Booker is the brother of former Nebraska cornerback Michael Booker, a 1997 first-round draft choice of the Atlanta Falcons. Dion is about the same size as his older brother and has about the same speed. "I'll be getting faster," Dion said. "We talk every week, and he's always giving me tips and pointers about how to pick up speed and how to learn all the plays."

Booker chose Nebraska over Colorado, Arizona State and Texas. He was a two-year starter at El Camino, playing running back, corner and safety. As a senior, he rushed for 930 yards and nine touchdowns and grabbed three interceptions.

Dion BOOKER



Ryan Soderlin

that much difference for the wingbacks than there was five years ago."

Brown, who set personal marks in winter conditioning, is one of the keys to rebuilding an offense that has four new starters on the line, a new starting I-back and a new quarterback. "I feel like it's my job to help build the confidence of the offense," he said.

Ron Brown: "He's a very solid football player. I thought he was an unsung hero on last year's team. He unselfishly realized Bobby Newcombe was going to be thrown into the hopper (at wingback). His primary role was blocking, and he did an exceptional job."

#21 Mike Brown

**Rover
5-10, 205, Jr.
Scottsdale (Saguaro), Ariz.**

A first-year starter as a sophomore in 1997, Brown played like a veteran. He led the team in tackles with 77 and earned a reputation as a ferocious hitter. This season, more of the same is expected.

Brown is following in the line of

#35 Kris Brown

**Place-Kicker
5-10, 205, Sr.
Southlake (Carroll), Texas**

Brown is being promoted by Nebraska officials as a Lou Groza Award and All-America candidate. He was a semifinalist for the Groza Award last season, when he made 62-of-62 point-after attempts and 18-of-21 field-goal attempts.

Brown has demolished every Husker career kicking record. In fact, the only career record he has yet to break is Mike Rozier's all-time scoring record. From 1981 to 1983, the Heisman Trophy winner scored 312 points, just 13 more than Brown.

Brown, who also hits booming kickoffs, has made his last 16 regular-season field-goal attempts.

"Kicking is a simple thing," he said. "I try to keep my method of kicking consistent — three steps back and two steps over, and just kick, kick, kick."



#14 Lance Brown

**Wingback
5-11, 190, Sr.
Papillion (LaVista), Neb.**

Last season, Brown was third on the team with 12 receptions for 226 yards, an average of 18.8 per reception. The fifth-year senior describes himself as a "wily old veteran."

"I pretty much know what we're doing and what we're supposed to do," he said. "Coach (Ron) Brown says the same things every spring since I've been here, and there isn't



Ryan Soderlin

other talented Husker rovers, including **Toby Wright**, who starts for the St. Louis Rams, and **Mike Minter** of the Carolina Panthers.

Brown was considered the top defensive back recruit in the nation by *SuperPrep* in the fall of 1995. The *Arizona Republic* named him all-state as a defensive back and running back, the first player in a decade to be so honored.

George Darlington: "If we were to make a clinic tape of the top form of the proper way to tackle, Mike Brown would be the lead actor. He tackles as well as anybody we have had around here in a long time."

#22 Ralph Brown
Right Corner
5-9, 180, Jr.
Hacienda Heights
(Bishop Amat), Calif.

Brown has started all 26 games at right cornerback in his two years as a Husker. He went into spring drills last year as the only returning starter. The Huskers lost only one starter from last year's team in free safety **Eric Warfield**.

Brown is being touted for All-America honors after a 1997 season in which he recorded 29 tackles (18 solo), intercepted two passes and broke up nine more. Brown has 21 pass breakups in two years, topping **Barron Miles'** Husker career record of 19 from 1992-94.

George Darlington: "I've never seen Ralph take a play off, and that's not exaggerating. That's all you can ever ask from a guy."

Lance
BROWN



#36 Correll Buckhalter
I-Back
6-0, 225, Soph.
Collins, Miss.

Early last season, when injuries plagued Nebraska's I-backs, Buckhalter stepped forward and scored two touchdowns in each of the first two games. Playing behind **Ahman Green**, Buckhalter finished last season with 311 yards on 54 carries, an average of 5.8 yards per rush. This season, Buckhalter will be expected to carry a heavier load. One thing is certain: He is physically equipped to take punishment — as well as give it.

"When linebackers and defensive backs



Ralph
BROWN



Jon Waller

run up to hit me, I'm going to let them know I'm coming, because I'm solid. I'm going to show defenders my power."

Muscle runs in the family. Buckhalter's brother, Chris, a tailback who has played on the Philadelphia Eagles' practice squad — packs 220 pounds on his 5-foot-10 frame. Their father, James, a truck driver who owns his own rig, is 6-3 and 220.

Frank Solich: "I think he has great endurance and excellent physical toughness. The thing about him, he played a share of last season hurt and yet still wanted on the field. He's that kind of guy."

#6 Kenny Cheatham
Split End
6-4, 210, Sr.
Phoenix (S. Mountain), Ariz.

Cheatham, who shares time with **Matt Davison**, is one of the most athletic players on the team, but has been plagued by injuries much of his career.

This season, receivers coach **Ron Brown** hopes Cheatham's work ethic matches his talent level, which is enormous.

Bothered by a nagging pulled

quadricep muscle, Cheatham sat out the first and last games of the 1997 season and also the seventh game. Despite his limited action, he tied I-back **Ahman Green** for the team lead with 14 catches. He averaged 13.6 yards per catch.

Cheatham caught three passes for 42 yards during Nebraska's 10-play, 67-yard touchdown drive that tied Missouri in the fourth quarter. It was one of Cheatham's best games of the season.

Brown: "The main thing I was looking for Kenny to do this spring was get through it without injuries. He's a senior, and he knows what he's doing. He's a very intelligent player."

Kenny
CHEATHAM



Ryan Soderlin

#68 Jeff Clausen
Right Tackle
6-6, 305, Jr.
Dixon, Ill.

Clausen broke his hand in the spring game and was scheduled to wear a cast for at least two months, which will restrict his weightlifting. However, he still is expected to battle **Jason Schwab** for the starting job this fall.



In addition to his hand, Clausen has been slowed by knee injuries. He appeared in five games last season, finishing with six "pancake" blocks, including three against Iowa State.

In 1996, Clausen played in four games behind right tackle **Eric Anderson**, but struggled with a nagging knee injury. He didn't play in the Huskers' last four games and missed much of spring ball in 1996.

Milt Tenopir: "He's a physical guy. He has been fighting knee problems for a couple years now, but he seemed to be coming along in the spring."

#7 Eric Crouch
Quarterback
6-0, 190, Fr.
Omaha (Millard North), Neb.

Crouch made monumental strides during spring practice, moving from No. 5 to No. 2 on the final spring depth chart.

Sophomore **Bobby Newcombe** won the top quarterback spot, in large part because of his big-play ability. Crouch, though, appears perfectly suited for Nebraska's offense. He is a fast,



tough runner, his options are technically sound, and he might be the best passer on the team.

Crouch was sidelined most of last season following surgeries on his right ankle and left knee. When he returned in November, it was only as a scout-team player. Now, Crouch is full speed. "I'm having a good time," he said. "I'm healthy, and that's what's making it exciting — that I can actually be out there on the field."

Crouch was highly recruited, choosing Nebraska over Ohio State and Notre Dame. He was the *USA Today* Nebraska Player of the Year after his senior season.

Frank Solich: "We looked at about eight different things in coming to the (quarterback) decision. We added them all up, and it came out to be Bobby. But our feeling is that **Frankie London** or Eric could lead this ballclub and do a great job of it."

#3 Matt Davison

**Split End
6-0, 180, Soph.
Tecumseh, Neb.**

Receivers coach **Ron Brown** marvels at Davison's freshman season. Sure, there was "The Catch" — Davison's diving grab of a deflected pass for a touchdown to send the Missouri game into overtime. But it was much more than that, Brown said.

Davison led the team with 232 receiving yards and finished tied with tight end **Sheldon Jackson** with 11 catches. Davison had four catches of 25 yards or more, including a 46-yard grab in game one against Akron. His statistics become even more impressive considering he played most the season with a strained quadricep.

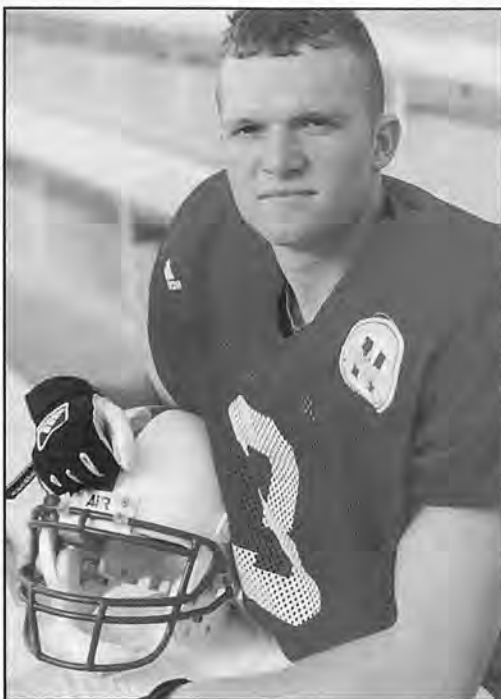
Brown: "I think Matt responds to pressure extremely well. He's a big-time player because he's a great competitor. He seems to have a savvy and knack for the game."

#85 T. J. DeBates

**Tight End
6-3, 250, Jr.
Stewartville, Minn.**

Last season, DeBates played in every game, getting occasional time at tight end while contributing on special teams.

Little was heard of DeBates until the waning moments of the Nov. 28 Colorado game, when an onside kick wobbled through his



Ryan Soderlin

arms, keeping the Buffaloes' hopes alive before the Huskers prevailed. "I've been doing my part on special teams all year and I miss one play and it kind of says it all for the whole season."

In the name of balance, it also should be noted DeBates made his first and only reception of the season during the second quarter of Nebraska's 54-15 win against Texas A&M in the Big 12 championship game. "I think I redeemed myself a little bit. It felt kind of good."

DeBates has established himself as Nebraska's second-best tight end.

Ron Brown: "He didn't play a whole lot last year, but he's going to have to play like a veteran this year."

#4 DeAngelo Evans

**I-Back
5-9, 210, Soph.
Wichita (Collegiate), Kan.**

Evans' progress was one of the most closely watched stories of spring practice. He received his first dose of game-type action since he was forced to the sideline after the 1996 Big 12 championship game because of a torn abdominal muscle. He responded well and seems ready to take over the role as starter.

"It just feels good psychologically to know I can go into contact and push through (defenders) and break tackles with no pain," Evans said.

Evans sat out spring practice in 1997 and underwent surgery the following July. He tried to return in August of

1997 but lasted only two practices. In 1996, he gained 776 yards and scored 14 touchdowns as a true freshman.

Frank Solich: "I think (Evans) is in pretty good playing shape. He'll get into better playing shape in terms of his quickness and out-right speed."

#19 Clint Finley

**Free Safety
5-11, 200, Soph.
Cuero, Texas**

Nebraska rush end **Chad Kelsay**, a highly regarded hit-man himself, marvels at the pop Finley packs. "I've never seen a kid who, every time he hits somebody, almost knocks them out. Every now and then everyone can come up with a big hit. But every time Clint tackles someone, he knocks the crap out of them."

Finley takes over as starter at free safety for departed senior **Eric Warfield**. Known for his punishing tackles, Finley spent the spring working on staying in control. Sometimes he has a tendency to play so hard that he occasionally misses a tackle.

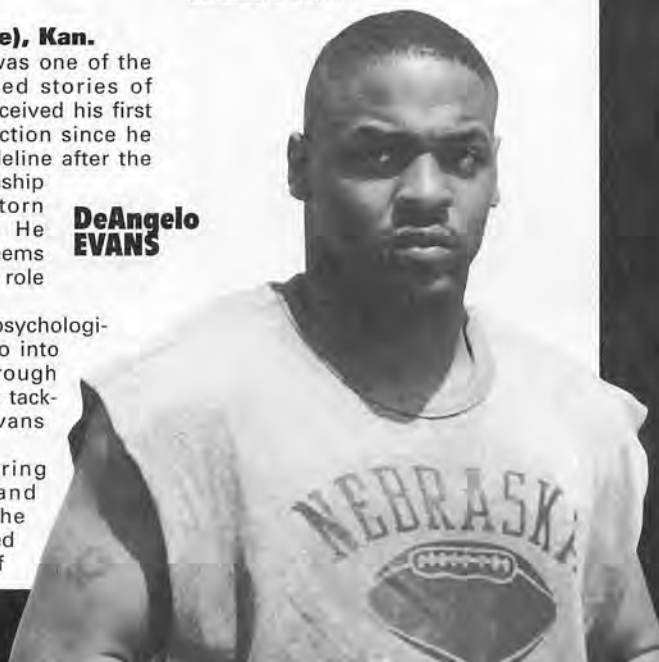
Finley was the only quarterback to sign with Nebraska in 1996, but he switched to safety in fall practice. Last season, he dislocated his elbow in fall camp and missed the first three games. He made his presence felt immediately upon returning, dumping a 330-pound Kansas State offensive lineman with a block on a **Joe Walker** interception return.

Frank Solich: "(Finley) is a very instinctive player. He has very good speed and hitting ability. It all adds up to him being an outstanding defensive back."



Matt Davison

DeAngelo Evans





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#44 Jay Foreman
Middle Linebacker
6-1, 240, Sr.
Eden Prairie, Minn.

Foreman is regarded as one of the nation's top middle linebackers and has emerged as a leader for the Nebraska defense.

"I take responsibility for the whole defense," Foreman told the *Omaha World-Herald*. "The way I look at it, if the defense is playing bad, the blame should be placed on me — kind of like the quarterback on offense."

Foreman enjoyed a solid spring, capped by a nine-tackle performance in the annual Red-White Spring Game. He started every game last season and finished second on the team with 61 tackles (17 solo). He recorded a career-best 12 tackles at Colorado.

After starting every game at strongside linebacker in 1995, Foreman backed up **Jon Hesse** at middle linebacker in 1996.

Craig Bohl: "Jay is a very intelligent player. His understanding of our defense is very thorough. He not only has a grasp of what he's doing, he knows what all the other players are supposed to do."

#72 Ben Gessford
Right Guard
6-2, 290, Sr.
Lincoln (East), Neb.

Gessford, a former walkon, has the task of replacing **Jon Zatechka**, one of four graduated starters from the 1997 Nebraska offensive line.

Gessford, who was given a scholarship in January, is confident in the talent of this year's line. "Oh, it's there," he said. "But there is chemistry, timing, knowledge and experience to gain to be any good at all. We'll establish our own identity in time."

Gessford, who weighed only about 215 pounds as a high school junior, chose to try Nebraska football at the suggestion of his father, James, a former standout at Hastings (Neb.) College who played for the Kansas City Chiefs.

"He said I should try it so I didn't ever look back and wonder, 'What if,'" the younger Gessford said. "It

was pretty hard to make the adjustment. I wasn't really moving up (the depth chart) the first couple years. It took me longer than some to make the adjustments necessary to work into the lineup."

Milt Tenopir: "Ben has really improved physically. He has good mobility and runs well and doesn't make mistakes. But if you're not strong enough, you can't whip anybody; now, he's strong enough."

#8 John Gibson
Split End/Wingback
5-11, 180, Soph.
Papillion (LaVista), Neb.

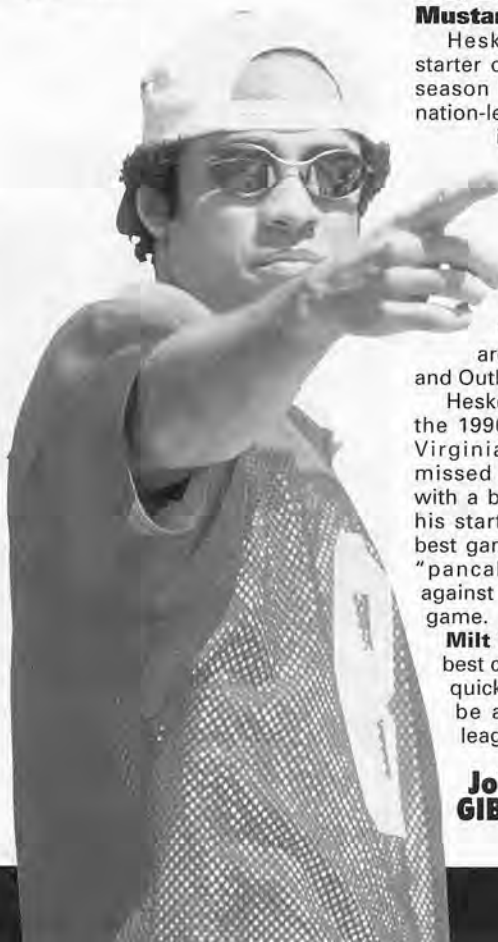
Gibson tore ligaments in his knee during a practice before Nebraska's second game last year and missed the rest of the season. He underwent surgery last September and then began preparing himself for spring practice.

Gibson practiced daily this spring but was held out of scrimmages. He is nearing full speed. Because of his versatility, he was listed No. 3 at split end and No. 4 at wingback on the final spring depth chart.

Gibson, who redshirted in 1996, was the *USA Today* Nebraska Player of the Year after his senior season in high school.



Jay FOREMAN



Ron Brown: "The guy has excellent speed and he's very fluid, athletic and acrobatic. He has good hands, and I always like to have a guy with the versatility to play both (split end and wingback). We have to find a way to get him on the field."

#77 Bobby Gill
Nosetackle
6-0, 275, Jr.
Lincoln (Northeast), Neb.

Gill, a former walkon, moved up to the top backup spot behind **Steve Warren** at nosetackle on the final spring depth chart, taking advantage of the lack of depth at the position created by injuries and dismissals.

Luis Almanzar, a 6-foot-3, 285-pound sophomore from Jersey City, N.J., has been injured too often to be a major factor this season, though he was listed No. 2 on the pre-spring depth chart. Another contributing factor to the lack of depth was the off-season dismissals of **Brandon Drum** and **Derek Allen** following separate incidents.

Charlie McBride: "Bobby is a guy who has just kept working. He has stayed healthy and got in the repetitions he's needed."

#59 Josh Heske
Center
6-3, 290, Sr.
Mustang, Okla.

Heske is the only returning starter on an offensive line that last season helped push Nebraska to a nation-leading average of 392.6 rushing yards per game. But Heske missed his second consecutive spring camp after undergoing back surgery following the Orange Bowl victory against Tennessee.

Heske returns in the fall, and Nebraska officials are touting him for All-America and Outland Trophy honors.

Heske has been a starter since the 1996 Orange Bowl win against Virginia Tech. Even though he missed all of spring ball last year with a broken right foot, he retained his starting role the entire fall. His best game featured a career-high 17 "pancake" blocks in a 54-15 win against Texas A&M in the Big 12 title game.

Milt Tenopir: "Josh is one of the best centers we've had and he's as quick as anybody we've had. He'll be as good as there is in this league and probably as good as there is around."

John GIBSON



Josh HESKE

#55 Russ Hochstein
Right Guard
6-3, 280, Soph.
Hartington (Cedar Catholic),
Neb.

A scholarship player, Hochstein appeared in five games last season and had his best day against Oklahoma, recording five "pancake" blocks.

In high school, he was a consensus all-state selection and a first-team All-America in at least one publication (*Bluechip*), after helping Cedar Catholic to the state playoffs all four years of his career. He was also the starting center on the basketball team, averaging 15 points and 10 rebounds.

Milt Tenopir: "Russ has improved a lot and attacks really well. And he has a good heart in him."



#50 Julius Jackson
Weakside Linebacker
6-0, 235, Jr.
Gainesville, Texas

Jackson has switched positions nearly as often as **Dennis Rodman** has changed his hair color. In the past three seasons, Jackson has moved from rush end to strongside linebacker to middle linebacker. At last, he has found a home at weakside linebacker as the top backup behind **Eric Johnson**.

Jackson showed big-play capability this spring and is now more comfortable with his assignments. Last season, he made only seven stops while playing behind the graduated **Octavious McFarlin** and Johnson.

"I'm human," Jackson said. "You're going to get frustrated. It was always, 'Why? I have the size, I have the speed. So what's going on?' You just have to wait your turn."

Charlie McBride: "A lot of times, guys are just slow to learn. They go through a guessing period where they're guessing wrong. Now, Julius is relaxed and playing with more self-confidence."

#88 Sheldon Jackson
Tight End
6-4, 245, Sr.
Diamond Bar (Damien), Calif.

Jackson is the clear leader among the Nebraska tight ends and is emerging as a team leader.

Last season he was the Huskers'

fifth-leading receiver with 11 regular-season catches for 189 yards (17.2 per catch) and two touchdowns. In the Orange Bowl, he led Nebraska with four catches for 56 yards.

Jackson says he doesn't consider himself a vocal leader. But he is regarded as one of the friendliest players on the team, and receivers coach **Ron Brown** counts on his words of advice to help a young bunch of tight ends.

"When I'm dealing with you one-on-one, I can talk to you," Jackson told the *Omaha World-Herald*. "I am a better teacher that way than when I'm with the team, although I can talk to the whole team if need be."

Brown: "(Jackson) was very good in winter conditioning about really taking charge. I think he sees himself as a leader now, after going around the block a few times."

#1 Eric Johnson
Weakside Linebacker
6-1, 205, Sr.
Phoenix (Alhambra),
Ariz.

One of Nebraska's best athletes, Johnson takes over as starting weakside linebacker after playing every game last season behind **Octavious McFarlin**.

Despite his back-up role, Johnson finished as the team's seventh-leading tackler with 49 stops (17 solo). He had three sacks and seven tackles for 29 yards in losses.

His best game last season was against Iowa State in November. His father, Edgar, flew in from Phoenix to watch his son play college football for the first time. Son responded with an 8-yard quarter-

Sheldon JACKSON



back sack and team-high nine tackles in a 77-14 demolition.

"My dad loved it," Johnson said. "We talked about the game all night long and he thought it was the best thing he ever saw."

#69 Adam Julch
Left Tackle
6-5, 315, Jr.
Omaha (Burke), Neb.

Nebraska was dealt a crushing blow to an already thin offensive line when Julch suffered a minor leg fracture and dislocated ankle during the spring game. The injury prohibits Julch from lifting weights and running for about two months, which means he might be out of shape when fall practice begins.



Eric JOHNSON



Jon Waller

Julch is one of four new starters on the Nebraska offensive line.

"Nebraska has never had a bad offensive line, and we're not going to be the first," Julch said. "This is the first year under Coach (**Frank Solich**), and we're going to do our part to make it as good as the great years under Coach (**Tom Osborne**)."

Julch played in 10 games last season as a backup to **Fred Pollack**, picking up more time as the season progressed. "It helped to play some when it mattered, because I'm over the nervousness part," he said.

Milt Tenopir: "Adam is going to be a very good football player. He started coming along at the end of last year."

#91 Loran Kaiser
Defensive Tackle
6-5, 255, Soph.
Farwell (St. Paul), Neb.

Kaiser wants to prove wrong those who feel Nebraska's defensive line lacks quality depth. "People always say things, but nobody really knows until something actually happens," said



Michael Warren

Julius JACKSON

Kaiser, whose hometown has only 152 residents. "People can say whatever they want. But when the season comes, we'll show them what's up."

Kaiser backs up **Jason Wiltz** at defensive tackle but can play nose tackle if needed. With **Steve Warren** and Wiltz sidelined with injuries, Kaiser led Nebraska in the spring game with 10 tackles.

Last season, Kaiser played behind **Jason Peter** and **Derek Allen** and recorded five stops. Allen and **Brandon Drum** were kicked off the team during the off-season after separate incidents, leaving Nebraska thin up front, at least in terms of numbers. Warren and Wiltz are 300 plus pounds, and Kaiser has added 20 pounds since last season and hopes to add at least 10 more before the opener.

Charlie McBride: "(Kaiser) is really improving. He has a chance to be a great player for us."

#57 Chad Kelsay Left Rush End 6-3, 250, Sr. Auburn, Neb.

Kelsay, who started 10 games last season opposite **Grant Wistrom**, was named Nebraska's Lifter of the Year in April by a vote of teammates.

"I learned a long time ago, from guys like **Jared Tomich**, **Jason Peter** and **Grant Wistrom**, that the extra half hour in the weight room will pay off," he said. "I think it carries over onto the field."

Kelsay was sidelined by a groin injury much of spring practice but appears ready to take his game to the next level. He finished last season as Nebraska's 10th-leading tackler with 34 stops, including three sacks for 29 yards in losses. He also had 14 quarterback hurries to rank fourth on the team.

Kelsay and right rush end **Mike Rucker** are two of the best players on a highly regarded defense.

#23 Bill Lafleur Punter 5-11, 200, Sr. Norfolk (Catholic), Neb.

Lafleur should be able to continue the string of four straight seasons of steady punting provided by **Darin Erstad** and **Jesse Kosch**, NU's punters the past three years.

Lafleur gives the position a lot of athleticism, which isn't always the case with punters. Both Lafleur and **Kris Brown** are among the top per-

formers among kickers in the history of winter conditioning. Both run the 40-yard dash in under 4.7 seconds and have vertical jumps higher than 30 inches.

#40 Billy Legate Fullback 5-11, 230, Sr. Clearwater, Neb.

Legate, a walkon, played in every game last season in a back-up role, rushing 12 times for 74 yards.

Legate has worked his way into earning considerable playing time despite the fact that Nebraska basically had no interest in him coming out of high school.

"He came up to the office and said he wanted to have us take a look at him," said **Frank Solich**, who was then the running backs coach. "Actually we didn't see a place for him. He didn't have the size for fullback or speed for an I-back. But we liked his work ethic, his work habits and his attitude."

Legate is also known for his work as a wedgebuster on kickoffs.

Dave Gillespie: "Billy is a proven

player. Probably his biggest strength is he knows the offense and always knows where to go and who to get to."

#1 Frankie London Wingback/Corner/Holder 6-0, 180, Jr. Lake Charles (LaGrange), La.

London endured an interesting and sometimes trying spring. He entered the workouts listed No. 1 at quarterback, but decided to move to another position after **Bobby Newcombe** was awarded the top QB job at the end of spring drills.

London was given a choice to move to either wingback or cornerback. He was scheduled to meet with receivers coach **Ron Brown** and

defensive backs coach **George Darlington** **Bill Lafleur** before making a final decision.

London was the most experienced of the top contenders for quarterback and had a solid spring. In fact, he actually posted the best marks in the grading system used by Nebraska coaches. "But we didn't go solely on grades," quarterbacks coach **Turner Gill** said. "There are so many other factors. It's never been etched in stone that the person who grades best is the one who plays."

#45 Joel Makovicka Fullback 5-11, 235, Sr. Brainard (East Butler), Neb.

Makovicka was held out of contact much of the spring with a minor knee injury, but seemed to be near full strength by the end of spring drills. "The most important thing for me right now is to get my strength back," he said. "I haven't been able to lift like I was lifting for a long time."

A former walkon, Makovicka is now considered one of the Huskers' best all-time fullbacks. Last season, he posted the fourth-best rushing total in the nation by a fullback with 685 yards while leading all fullbacks with 6.3 yards per carry. Makovicka hopes he starts off this season like he did last year. He rushed for 50 or more yards in each of the first three outings.



Chad Kelsay

Frankie London



Ryan Soderlin



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#15 Willie Miller

Fullback

6-0, 230, Soph.

Omaha (Bellevue West), Neb.

Miller is challenging Billy Legate for the No. 2 fullback spot despite his relative lack of experience.

The only current Husker fullback who was awarded a scholarship out of high school, Miller gained 49 yards on 10 carries last season. He started slowly in spring practice this year but stepped it up late. He has concentrated on becoming a better blocker; it hasn't always been easy after playing tailback at Bellevue West High, where he ran for 1,527 yards during his senior season.

Dave Gillespie: "Willie is going to be a very good player. He has improved each practice. He's a big guy with good speed and aggressiveness."



#12 Bobby Newcombe

Quarterback

6-0, 195, Soph.

Albuquerque (Highland), N.M.

Newcombe, arguably the team's most electrifying player, won the No. 1 quarterback job on the strength of an outstanding performance in the annual Red-White spring scrimmage.

Newcombe rushed for 175 yards, including a spring game record 91-yard touchdown run. He also completed 4-of-9 passes for 64 yards, including a 43-yard touchdown pass to walkon **Casey Vanderhoef**.

Newcombe, who played the final 10 games last season at wingback, entered spring ball sharing the No. 2 spot on the depth chart with **Monte Christo**. By the end of spring practice, however, Newcombe, **Frankie London** and **Eric Crouch** were battling for the top spot under intense media scrutiny.

"I was just relieved they made a decision on the whole thing, whether it was wingback or quarterback," said Newcombe, who may have moved back to wingback had he not won the top QB job.

#37 Tony Ortiz

Strongside Linebacker

6-0, 215, Jr.

Waterbury (Crosby), Conn.

Ortiz moved past **Brian Shaw** into the starting spot at strongside linebacker for the last three games in

1997. In 12 regular season games, he recorded 32 tackles (11 solo), including six for 26 yards in losses and three sacks for 24 yards in losses.

Ortiz, who boasts 4.5-second speed in the 40-yard dash, is a strong blitzing and has improved as a run stopper.

"I'm not just a blitz guy anymore," Ortiz said. "Brian Shaw and I complement each other in our style of play. I think we're both more complete because we point out mistakes and good plays to each other all the time."

Ortiz came to Nebraska with super hero credentials. *SuperPrep* listed him the No. 1 linebacker prospect in the nation and he was a prep All-America in virtually every publication. Last season, he started living up to his press clippings.

#11 Jerome Peterson

Right Cornerback

5-7, 185, Jr.

Port Allen, La.

Peterson started the first three games last season before giving way to **Erwin Swiney**, who started the rest of the year. Peterson finished with 10 tackles, four pass breakups and an interception.

Peterson drew praise from secondary coach **George Darlington** for his play in the Red-White spring game, in which he recorded four tackles, including three unassisted stops.

Peterson gives Nebraska an experienced backup. In 1996, he played behind **Michael Booker** and recorded six tackles.

Darlington: "Jerome gives you experience, knowledge and excellent speed. He's a guy you don't expect to make any mistakes."

Ryan Soderfin



Bobby NEWCOMBE

#13 Carlos Polk

Middle Linebacker

6-3, 245, Soph.

Rockford (Guilford), Ill.

Polk has a deep voice that sounds a little like **Barry White's** and makes him seem older than age 21. And then there's his easily distinguishable bowlegged walk. "Carlos walks like an old man, but he runs well."

Ortiz, who boasts 4.5-second speed in the 40-yard dash, is a strong blitzing and has improved as a run stopper.



Jon Waller

and he's pretty physical," **Carlos Polk** Nebraska linebackers coach **Craig Bohl** said.

Polk, a solid No. 2 behind **Jay Foreman**, is working to upgrade his knowledge of the defense in hopes of becoming the team's defensive quarterback in 1999.

Polk always appears as if he's limping, even when he's healthy. During the spring, however, he was slowed by a nagging ankle injury. He also injured his collarbone in the Orange Bowl. Getting Polk healthy is one of Bohl's few major concerns entering the season.

Bohl: "That middle linebacker position is complicated. Carlos is not as far along as Jay, but he's starting to get a better grasp."

#54 Dominic Raiola

Center/Snapper

6-2, 300, Fr.

Honolulu (St. Louis), Hawaii

Raiola came on strong in the final

two spring scrimmages and will see significant playing time, including work as the No. 1 deep snapper. Offensive line coach **Milt Tenopir** is considering moving Raiola to another spot along the line to help ease depth concerns.

Raiola saw extensive work with the top offense this spring because starter **Josh Heskew** sat out while recovering from back surgery.

Raiola was Nebraska's first scholarship recipient from Hawaii, where he played on a powerful high school team. St. Louis School did not lose a game in his last three years and in 1996 was ranked 15th nationally after winning its 11th straight state title. Raiola earned first-team all-state honors his junior and senior seasons and was No. 61 on the *SuperPrep* Far West team.

Tenopir: "Dominic is a sharp and powerful guy. He's pretty well-advanced for a freshman; he picks things up well."



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#9 Khari Reynolds

Left Cornerback
5-10, 185, Soph.
Mays Landing
(Egg Harbor Township), N.J.

Nebraska recruited Reynolds to play wingback or split end, but he moved to defense after his true freshman season in 1996. He started last spring at the bottom of the depth chart, but has advanced to become a key factor in the defensive backfield as the top backup to **Erwin Swiney**.

Reynolds wasn't listed on the three-deep chart last season until after the Oct. 4 Kansas State game. That's when Swiney moved over to become the left-side starter and Reynolds was elevated past senior **Jason Benes** into the top reserve spot on the right side behind starter **Ralph Brown**. Reynolds appeared in six games and made two tackles.

Reynolds' 1.44-second time in the 10-yard dash tops all Nebraska defensive backs.

George Darlington: "Of the corners, he probably improved the most (during spring practice). He has certainly put himself in position to play some."

#84 Mike Rucker

Right Rush End
6-6, 250, Sr.
St. Joseph (Benton), Mo.

After alternating with **Chad Kelsay** on the left side last season, Rucker takes over the right rush end spot vacated by All-American **Grant Wistrom**, the sixth pick overall in the National Football League draft.

Rucker brings big-play capability to the defense. He has played in 33 regular season games and has 31 tackles for losses and 15 sacks. Last season, his 15 tackles for losses and seven sacks trailed only Wistrom (17 tackles for losses, eight sacks) in those categories.

Many teams decided to run away from Wistrom, creating opportunities for Rucker and Kelsay. This season, it will be interesting to see which side opponents run toward most. Neither seems a very good option.

#65 Jason Schwab

Right Tackle
6-1, 300, Jr.
Eagan
(Cretin-Derham Hall), Minn.

Schwab, one of four new starters on the offensive line, is probably the best squat lifter on the team, according to Nebraska strength coach **Danny Noonan**. "Only (center) **Matt Baldwin** is close," Noonan said.

Schwab came to Nebraska as a

294-pound walkon with 20 percent body fat. He earned a scholarship before the start of last season and has lowered his body fat to 15 percent while gaining more than 20 pounds of muscle. He has lowered his 10-yard dash from 1.99 seconds to 1.75 seconds and his 40-yard dash from 5.68 seconds to 5.19 seconds.

Schwab and junior **Jeff Clausen** shared the top spot on the depth chart at the end of spring drills.

Milt Tenopir: "Jason probably has as much physical talent as anybody, but the mental part needs to continue to improve."

#46 Brian Shaw

Strongside Linebacker
6-1, 215, Jr.
Deweese (Sandy Creek), Neb.

Shaw and **Tony Ortiz** waged a tight battle for the starting spot at strongside linebacker all spring, with Shaw gaining the late edge. In the Red-White game, Shaw made six tackles (two solo) for the No. 1 defense.

Shaw came to Nebraska as a walkon but earned a scholarship in 1996, when he played in every game behind **Jamel Williams**. In 1997, Shaw started eight of the first nine games before giving way to



Jon Waller

Jason SCHWAB

#63 James Sherman

Left Guard
6-2, 295, Jr.
LaVerne (Whittier), Calif.

Sherman, one of four new starters on the offensive line, hasn't experienced consistent playing time since high school. He has earned the task of replacing Outland Trophy winner **Aaron Taylor**.

"I've put in my time here and tried to learn," Sherman said. "The focus is there, but I'm like so many guys on our line this year — not much experience, plenty of potential and the strength of the offense on our heads."

Sherman underwent knee surgery two years ago and again last year. He was highly touted coming out of high school, earning lineman of the year honors by the *Los Angeles Times* for its Southeast Section, which includes all the large schools in Los Angeles County. He received scholarship offers from Southern Cal, UCLA, Washington and Colorado.

Milt Tenopir: "James needs to have a good summer in the weight room. He's a smart guy, and he'll do fine."



Khari REYNOLDS



#16 Erwin Swiney

Left Cornerback
6-0, 185, Soph.
Lincoln (Northeast), Neb.

Swiney, who started the final 10 games last season as a true freshman, has been bothered by ostiaitis pubis, an inflammation of the area around the hip joints. He missed all of spring practice but attended the sessions to remain mentally in tune.

Swiney, who didn't play football until his junior year in high school, became the second true freshman to start in the Husker secondary in the last two years when he took over the left



Erwin SWINEY

Jon Waller

side for **Jerome Peterson** in game four. Swiney finished with 24 tackles (13 solo), and recorded four breakups, two fumble recoveries and two interceptions. In the Orange Bowl, he was second on the team with five tackles. Not bad for an athlete who played organized football for only two years in high school.

George Darlington: "We assumed he'd be back quicker (from the injury). We're playing it by ear. He's certainly mentally ready, because he's paid attention to what we're doing. But the injury set

him back as far as technique work goes."

#92 Travis Toline
Right Rush End
6-3, 245, Sr.
Wahoo, Neb.

Toline is a scholarship athlete who has never started a game. In 1996, he played behind All-America left rush end **Jared Tomich** and **Chad Kelsay**. Last season, he played behind All-America



Grant Wistrom on the right side, appearing in 11 games and making seven tackles, including three for six yards in losses. This season, he will play behind **Mike Rucker** on the right side.

Toline's intelligence manifests itself on the field in his ability to be at the right place at the right time. He misses few assignments, according to coaches.

Toline has been a regular contributor on the kickoff coverage, kickoff return and punt return teams. "The kicking game a lot of times sets the tone for the whole game," Toline said.

Nelson Barnes: "Travis is a solid, solid team player. Whatever I ask him to do, he's doing it. Travis doesn't make mistakes, and you know he's always going to give you 100-percent effort."

#83 Kyle Vanden Bosch
Left Rush End
6-4, 260, Soph.
Larchwood
(West Lyon Community), Iowa

Vanden Bosch missed much of spring practice with a hamstring pull, but is expected to make a strong impact this season. He played sparingly last season, finishing with 21

tackles, including a sack. He also had four quarterback hurries.

Vanden Bosch arrived on campus in August 1997 as one of the team's strongest players. In high school, he drew comparisons to former Nebraska All-American **Trev Alberts**, a native of Cedar Falls, Iowa.

"They mentioned Trev Alberts' name a lot when I was recruited to Nebraska," Vanden Bosch said. "I really didn't follow him. He did some great things, and anybody who can make an impact like that is a great player."

Nelson Barnes: "We're all excited about seeing what he can do. We were hoping to get him a lot of (repetitions) this spring so that his abilities could be enhanced. But we still feel he's going to be able to step in during the fall. He's been out there (watching) every day and knows what to do."

#61 Brandt Wade
Left Guard
6-2, 300, Sr.
Springfield (Platteview), Neb.

Playing a back-up role, Wade recorded nine "pancake" blocks last season, including two apiece against Oklahoma and Iowa State. He overcame a torn posterior cruciate ligament in his left knee during spring practice in 1997. This spring, he played well and looks ready to fill in behind **James Sherman** at left guard.



In 1996, Wade played five games as a reserve right guard after playing four games behind **Aaron Taylor** at left guard in 1995. He was the 1994 Nebraska high school heavyweight wrestling champion

Kyle VANDEN BOSCH

in the state's second-largest class. He was a consensus all-state lineman and the first-ever Platteview graduate to land a Nebraska football scholarship.

Milt Tenopir: "Brandt lacks some speed, but he knows what he's doing. He's going to have to drop some weight, and maybe that will help his mobility some."

#25 Joe Walker
Rover
5-10, 200, Soph.
Arlington (Lamar), Texas

Walker saw extensive action last season as a fifth defensive back in passing situations and recorded 27 tackles, including three for 19 yards in losses. Playing as a true freshman, he broke up a pass and had two interceptions, returning one 71 yards for a score against Kansas State.

Walker enrolled at Nebraska during the spring of 1997 after graduating from Arlington (Lamar), Texas, in May of 1996. He sat out one semester and his career was put on hold because of academic questions.

In addition to backing up **Mike Brown**, Walker is Nebraska's top returning kickoff return man. Last season, he led the team with 15 returns for 389 yards, an average of 25.9 per chance. He will also return punts, along with **Shevin Wiggins** and **Lance Brown**.

Joe WALKER

Jon Waller



Jon Waller

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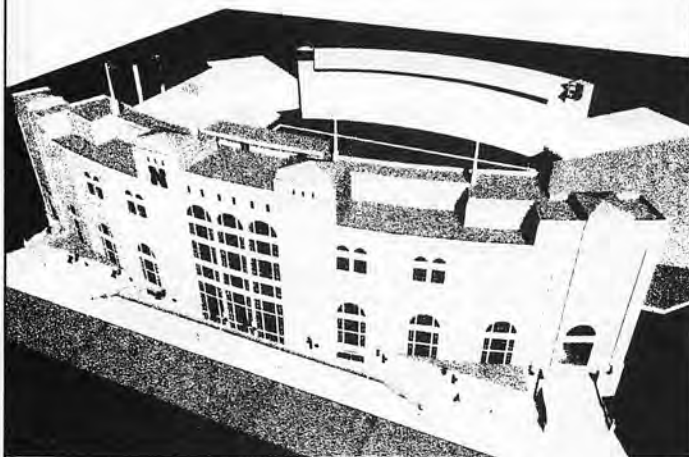
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#96 Steve Warren
Nosetackle
6-1, 305, Jr.
Springfield (Kickapoo), Mo.

Warren is Nebraska's only experienced nosetackle. He played in every game last season as a backup to **Jason Wiltz**, who has moved to tackle to fill the spot vacated by first-round NFL draft pick **Jason Peter**.

In 1997, Warren recorded 19 tackles (six solo), five quarterback hurries and a sack. When Peter had to leave the Big 12 Championship game in the first quarter with a back injury, Warren stepped in and made a career-high five tackles.

Warren saw immediate action as a scholarship freshman in 1996, playing in eight games and posting six tackles.

Warren sat out the spring game with an ankle injury but should be fine by August.

"I probably have to drop a little weight to increase my stamina and be able to play a whole game, so I'm working on that," he said.

#5 Shevin Wiggins
Wingback
5-11, 200, Sr.
Palmetto (Manatee), Fla.

Wiggins is easily one of the Huskers' most quiet and humble players. "I think those are qualities that are missing nowadays in a lot of

Shevin WIGGINS



Jason WILTZ

people," receivers coach **Ron Brown** said. "We live in an era of trash-talking and a lot of verbiage. I think Shevin has some shyness to him. But I've seen him become a little more outgoing."

Wiggins and **Lance Brown** will see the bulk of the action at the position. Last season Wiggins played perhaps his best game in the Orange Bowl, scoring his first rushing touchdown and returning a kickoff 29 yards.

Wiggins had six catches for 76 yards in 1997, including two for 25 yards against Akron. He also returned 19 punts for 220 yards, including a 39-yarder against Iowa State.

Ron Brown: "He's one of the most explosive players on the team. He can really smack you (when he blocks)."

#99 Jason Wiltz
Defensive Tackle
6-1, 310, Sr.
New Orleans (St. Augustine), La.

Wiltz moves from nosetackle to No. 1 defensive tackle, replacing **Jason Peter**, a first-round NFL draft pick of the Carolina Panthers.

"Jason was a great player, and I'm sure people are sorry that he's gone," Wiltz said. "But we don't feel like there's going to be a dropoff. I'm ready to go out and make a name for myself and show people what I can do."

In 1997, Wiltz played in 11 games, starting 10. He was ninth on the team with 34 tackles (14 solo), including five tackles for 6 yards in losses and two sacks. He is considered to be a slightly bet-



Bob Bevan

Scott B. Smith



Steve WARREN

ter pass-rusher than **Steve Warren**.

Wiltz's weight occasionally slows him a little. He has a hearty appetite for cajun food — gumbo, shrimp creole, crawfish, etc. He missed the spring game with a groin injury.

Charlie McBride: "Wiltz needs to get his weight down a little and get a little more quickness and endurance for playing the long haul. But he is a really capable player."

#87 Tracey Wistrom
Tight End
6-4, 215, Fr.
Webb City, Mo.

Wistrom made a large jump to the No. 3 spot on the depth chart with an impressive spring.

Though much lighter than Nebraska's top two tight ends, Wistrom has distinguished himself as a receiver.

The younger brother of 1997 Lombardi Award winner Grant, Tracey was a two-time all-state tight end in high school. As a senior, he caught 48 passes for 768 yards and 13 touchdowns. On defense, he had two interceptions, and 161 total tackles.

Ron Brown: "Tracey is surprisingly strong. He still gets bounced around occasionally, but he's an excellent receiver. His mistakes are minimal for a freshman, and he learns quickly." ■



Sometimes Two Arms Are Better Than One

Much like today, in 1965 the physical demands placed on quarterbacks required more than one to be ready to play

During an interview on the day he announced Bobby Newcombe had emerged from spring practice as the No. 1 quarterback, coach Frank Solich was asked if there was as much interest in spring competition for positions in the mid-1960s, when he was a Nebraska football player.

"Maybe Fred Duda and Bob Churchich had one of these deals," he said. "I don't know."

Duda and Churchich were Cornhusker quarterbacks in 1965. Duda, like Solich, was a senior. Churchich was a junior. And their competition for the starting job was spirited.

Duda had been the starter in 1964 before suffering a broken leg during a 14-7 victory at Iowa State in the third game of the season. Churchich replaced him and led the team to six consecutive victories (before a 17-7 loss at Oklahoma), the Big Eight championship and a Cotton Bowl bid.

Churchich, conference Sophomore of the Year, began the 1965 season as the starter but lost the job to Duda because of a lackluster performance, ironically, in the third game against Iowa State.

Duda was the starter for the remainder of the season, but Churchich came off the bench to lead the Cornhuskers to a 21-9 victory in the final game of the regular season against Oklahoma.

The styles of Duda and Churchich were markedly different. Duda was more of a runner; Churchich was more of a passer. Churchich led the Big Eight in passing in 1964 with a school record 893 yards.

He came off the bench to replace Duda in the 1966 Orange Bowl game and completed 12-of-17 passes for 232 yards and an Orange Bowl record three touchdowns.

Churchich's strong right arm also served him well on the baseball team. He played third base and was the Big

Eight's leading hitter (in conference games) in 1965, with a .383 average.

(While he was in high school, his American Legion team finished third in the Little League World Series.)

"Bob was a multi-sport guy, like me," Solich said with a laugh.

Actually, Solich was a two-sport letterman at Nebraska. He also was Churchich's baseball teammate in 1965, playing the outfield and batting leadoff for coach Tony Sharpe.



Mike Babcock

University of Nebraska



With Fred Duda, Bob Churchich (above) was part of a two-man rotation at quarterback for Bob Devaney in 1965.

Had he not suffered a knee injury that forced him out of the 1966 Orange Bowl game, Solich would have earned a second letter in baseball to go with the three he earned in football.

Solich was an outstanding baseball player at Holy Name High School in Cleveland. "In some ways, it might have been my best sport," he recalled. "For the most part, my biggest problem was trying to get as big as I possibly could to play football. I lifted hard, and that didn't do much for my swing.

"I was relatively tight at the plate. Stretching was pretty much unheard

of then."

As a result, hitting "was the weakest part of my game," he said.

During his pre-spring news conference, Solich offered an anecdote to illustrate that. "I struck out once, and Bob Devaney was standing alongside the fence," said Solich. "He indicated to me that I would be right back on the football practice field if any more of those type of things occurred."

Devaney, by the way, was a high school baseball coach in Saginaw, Mich. He told Bob Buhl, one of his players, that he might want to consider another sport because he probably didn't have much of a future in baseball. Buhl went on to pitch in the major leagues for 15 seasons.

The 1965 Cornhusker baseball team for which Solich played was 12-8 overall and 12-6 in the Big Eight to finish second. Nebraska wouldn't finish that high again for 14 years.

Nebraska was pitching rich in 1965. The staff ERA was 2.64, which still stands as the school single-season record. Right-hander Stan Bahnsen was the ace of the pitching staff, with a conference-leading 1.44 ERA, and a first-team All-Big Eight selection.

Bahnsen was one of three Cornhusker pitchers who were drafted that season. The others were Gary Neibauer and Bob Stickels. Bahnsen and Neibauer both reached the major leagues.

Bahnsen was chosen American League Rookie of the Year in 1968 after compiling a 17-12 record with the New York Yankees. His career record in 16 big league seasons was 146-149.

Churchich was a second-team All-America selection by the American Baseball Coaches Association on a 16-9 Nebraska team in 1966, but he passed up an opportunity to play for the United States team in the World Baseball Tournament in Honolulu, Hawaii, that summer to get married. ■

1. Ohio State 2. Nebraska 3. Florida State 4. UCLA 5. Florida 6. Arizona State 7. Kansas State 8. North Carolina 9. LSU
10. Colorado State 11. West Virginia 12. Michigan 13. Tennessee 14. Texas A&M 15. Southern Miss 16. Penn State 17. Syracuse
18. Georgia Tech 19. Washington 20. Air Force

For the better

part of this decade, an exclusive number of teams have been regular visitors to the party known as the top 10. Traditional powers such as Nebraska, Florida and Florida State are practically charter members of the poll party. Last season, however, those teams felt the impact of party crashers like North Carolina and Kansas State. The usual suspects will once again be strong in 1998, but they had better be prepared for some company.

Last season, Nebraska and Michigan were forced to split the national championship pie after matching each other with undefeated seasons and impressive bowl victories. Thanks to the inclusion of the Pac-10 and Big Ten conferences in the new Bowl Championship Series, there will only be one national champion this season. The Fiesta Bowl, which will be played on Jan. 4, 1999 in Tempe, Ariz., will match the nation's top two teams, regardless of conference affiliation.

Despite losing several key components from last year's team, Nebraska has a solid chance of being one of the two teams in the Fiesta Bowl hunt. The Cornhuskers will have to contend with Big 12 rival Kansas State late in the season, but the Wildcats haven't beaten Nebraska in 19 years. The Huskers will make it 20 in 1998.

Like Nebraska, Florida State will have a new quarterback this season. That wouldn't normally be a problem for the Seminoles, but Dan Kendra, who was slated to be the starter, injured his knee during spring drills and could miss the entire 1998 season.

With several of the nation's top teams entering the fall with question marks, there is one team that has it all — period. Ohio State is loaded with talent on both sides of the ball and has arguably the NCAA's best defensive player in Butkus Award-winning linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer. The Buckeyes lost quarterback Stanley Jackson and tailback Pepe Pearson, but won't lose a step with Joe Germaine and Michael Wiley. Throw in a pair of game-breaking receivers (David Boston and Dee Miller) and an All-American cornerback (Antoine Winfield) and the Buckeyes should be celebrating in Tempe at season's end.

We raised some eyebrows last year when we predicted that North Carolina would finish second in the nation. The Tar Heels didn't quite fulfill our prophecy, but they did finish fourth in the final Associated Press poll. Although head coach Mack Brown bolted for Texas in December after leading the Tar Heels into national prominence, North Carolina shouldn't miss a beat with new head man Carl Torbush and two-time consensus All-American cornerback Dre' Bly, one of the most exciting players in all of college football.

Who are our dark horse selections for 1998, you ask? Arizona State has one of best defensive units in the country and is loaded at all of the skill positions. The Sun Devils also benefit by not having to face the Pac-10's other premier team, UCLA, during the regular season.

A conference that traditionally has not been given respect in the national polls is the WAC. Once dominated by Brigham Young, the WAC now features several strong teams, including Colorado State and Air Force. Colorado State has a record of 36-14 over its last four seasons, and the Rams have a favorable schedule that could vault them into the top 10 in 1998.

Another team to watch for is West Virginia. The Mountaineers have one of the nation's best running backs in Amos Zereoue, and despite the fact that they play Ohio State to open the season, the Mountaineers have the talent to run the table in the Big East Conference.

Who would ever have envisioned a preseason top 20 that didn't include Notre Dame or Miami? They have temporarily been plucked from the nation's elite, and while their return is undoubtedly imminent, like many other schools, they will spend the 1998 season watching the party from the outside. ■

NATIONAL TOP 20



1st

2nd

3rd

4th

5th

AROUND THE NATIONAL HORN

ROLL THE TAPE

The NCAA Football Rules Committee voted to rekindle two old initiatives in the face of new challenges to educate players, coaches, administrators and officials regarding sportsmanship and consistency in uniforms and equipment.

During their annual spring meeting, the Rules Committee also approved rules changes that will allow a defensive player to return a backward pass.

The Rules Committee also requested funding to produce a sportsmanship videotape that would be supplied to all NCAA football-playing institutions and officiating organizations, as well as a four-color poster that would depict the proper way to wear the uniform and mandatory playing equipment.

"While we have seen significant improvement in sportsmanship since 1995, the Rules Committee believes it can be improved still more with continued educational efforts," said **Vincent J. Dooley**, chair of the NCAA Football Rules Committee and director of athletics at the University of Georgia. "We want everyone associated with the college game — players, coaches, administrators, officials and fans — to understand how important 'team' celebration is to our game and that players who attempt to draw attention solely to themselves will be penalized."

The sportsmanship videotape will be the second of its kind. The first videotape was produced and viewed by all football-playing schools before the 1995 season.

Similar to the first tape, the committee intends to present a number of play situations that show both good and bad sportsmanship so that players, coaches and officials know what to expect before the 1998 season.

The poster will display how the uniform and the mandatory playing equipment are supposed to be worn. The last uniform/equipment poster was produced in 1984.

The committee's most recent interest in establishing consistency with the uniform began last year when it passed a rule that will require, effective in 1999, that the jersey be full-length and tucked into the pants.

At this year's meeting, the committee passed the following rules pertaining to uniforms and/or equipment: that all squad members must wear visible socks or leg coverings that are identical in color, design and length; that all eye shields, if worn, must be clear (transparent) and made from molded and rigid material; and in 1999, all gloves or hand pads, if worn, must be gray in color.

The committee also amended the rules so that NCAA member institutions can, in the case of a death or catastrophic injury or illness, memorialize a player or person with a patch or decal not greater than 1 1/2" in diameter that displays the number, name or initials of the individual on the uniform or helmet.

For the first time in the history of college football, a backward pass can be recovered and advanced by the defense. Responding to the overwhelming support of coaches, the committee cited consistency as the reason it adopted the new rule.

"The committee responded to a large majority of coaches (74 percent) who wanted to see a consistent application of the rules similar to how the defense is allowed to advance a fumble," said Dooley.

A measure to reduce the possibility of four or more overtime periods in a game was among several safety-related rules changes approved by the committee.

The committee also expanded the definition of an illegal chop block, further restricted crack-back blocking, allowed officials to stop an imminent play if a player is not wearing a mouth guard, and increased the penalty for unnecessarily violent hits on punt returners.

After hearing reports on the effect that lengthy overtime games had on players last season, the committee approved a rule requiring a team that scores a touchdown to attempt a two-point conversion, beginning in the third overtime period. Extra-point kicks will be disallowed.

The committee also voted to seek approval from the Division I-A Championships/Competition Cabinet to mandate that officiating crews must be assigned from the same officiating organization beginning in 1999. Currently, split officiating crews (from different conferences or organizations) are allowed in college football.

As it relates to officiating, the committee voted to request funding to help support a clinic for Division II and III conference supervisors of officials and/or commissioners.

The committee earmarked the following rules to study during 1998: crack-back blocks; consistency in moving the game along (studying the National Football League procedure whereby a 40-second clock begins when the ball is dead vis-a-vis the current 25-second clock on the ready-for-play signal); intentional grounding; ban on bandannas; and pass interference after a spread-punt formation.

RUNNING IN PLACE

For the first time in five years the nation's leading rusher will return to try and make it two in a row.

Ricky Williams, who rushed for 1,893 yards (172.1 per game and 6.8 per carry), is back in the University of Texas backfield under new coach **Mack Brown**. Brown, who coached at

North Carolina last year, replaced **John Mackovic**, who was reassigned within the UT athletic department. Williams also led the nation in scoring last year with 152 points.

"I breathed a huge sigh of relief when Ricky decided to stay," Brown said after Williams changed his mind about entering the National Football League draft.

"Obviously he's the centerpiece of this offense."

For the first time in 13 years the leading rusher and leading passer from the previous season return. UCLA's **Cade McNown**, who led the nation with a 168.6 rating a year ago, is back to call the signals for the Bruins. McNown passed for 2,877 yards and 22 touchdowns during the 1997 season.

Tim Couch of Kentucky, who finished second in the nation in total offense last year behind Louisiana Tech's **Tim Rattay**, is another top returning passer.

Couch accounted for 340.9 yards per game and led the SEC with 37 touchdown passes. He will be the heavy favorite to win the Heisman Trophy in 1999 if he stays for his senior season.

THEY COUNT

Beginning in the fall of 1998, NCAA Division I-A football teams can count one game against a Division I-AA opponent every four years to meet the minimum six-win requirement to be considered for postseason bowl competition if the opponent meets certain scholarship requirements.

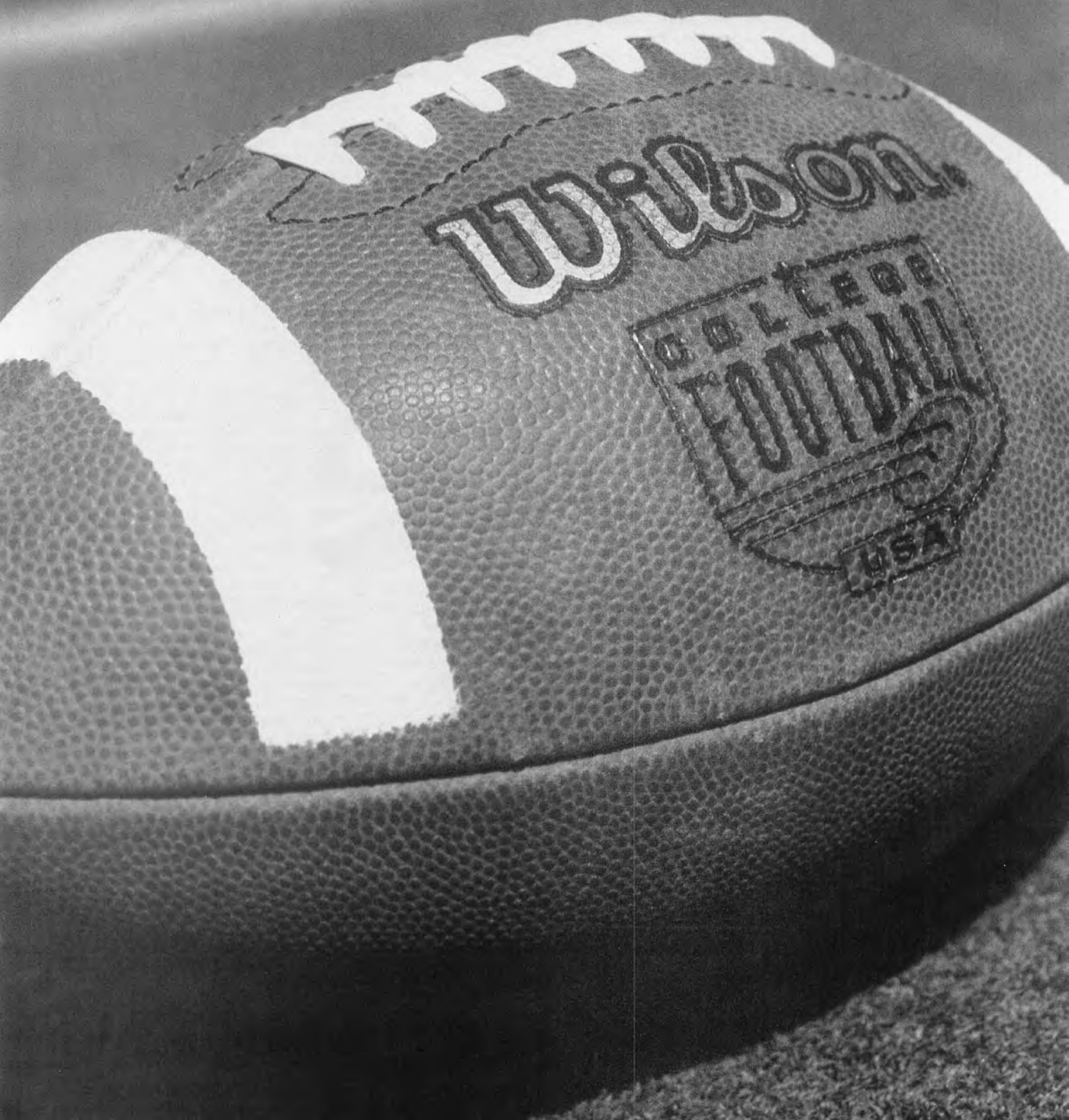
The Management Council's Division I-A members approved the legislation after amendments were added that would limit the exemption for use by a Division I-A school to no more than once every four years and against opponents that awarded a minimum average of 60 full grants-in-aid over the preceding three years. ■



The NCAA took away dark visors, but gave the go-ahead for patches to be worn in remembrance of fallen teammates.

S C O U T

BIG 12 CO



ING REPORTS CONFERENCE

NORTH

		REGULAR SEASON PROJECTED FINISH	
		Conference	Overall
1	Nebraska	8-0	12-0
2	Kansas State	7-1	10-1
3	Colorado	6-2	9-2
4	Missouri	4-4	6-5
5	Kansas	2-6	5-6
6	Iowa State	1-7	3-8

SOUTH

		REGULAR SEASON PROJECTED FINISH	
		Conference	Overall
1	Texas A&M	7-1	10-2
2	Oklahoma State	5-3	8-3
3	Oklahoma	4-4	7-4
4	Texas	3-5	5-6
5	Texas Tech	2-6	5-6
6	Baylor	0-8	1-10

Michael Bishop wasn't doing an impression of Douglas MacArthur leaving Corregidor in 1942. And the circumstances were hardly comparable. Still, Bishop did vow to return.

"This is just the beginning," the Kansas State quarterback told the *Arizona Republic* after the Wildcats' victory against Syracuse in the Fiesta Bowl game. "We should be back next year."

"This win right here should set the tone for next season. We'll be back."

A Kansas State return to the Fiesta Bowl is "the plan, nothing less," Wildcat wide receiver Darnell McDonald told the Phoenix newspaper. "Nebraska best watch out."

Such exuberance was understandable, coming on the heels of an 11-1 season.

There might have been a better way to celebrate the 35-18 victory than by issuing a public challenge to the

was in 1997 than will be Nebraska, which lost, among others, Peter, Lombardi Award winner Grant Wistrom, Outland Trophy winner Aaron Taylor, Ahman Green and Scott Frost.

Including kickers, the Wildcats have 20 returning starters.

Kansas State has the best chance of unseating Nebraska in the Big 12 North Division, and that conceivably could lead to a shot at the national championship. The Wildcats and Cornhuskers look to be the best in the conference, exclusive of division, and the conference champion might well end up with a bid from the Fiesta Bowl, which will host this season's national title game.

And with the Pac-10 and Big Ten finally joining the conferences in what formerly was the Bowl Alliance, the Fiesta Bowl's national championship game should be just that.

Another reason for optimism at

Bishop and Jones, a consensus selection as the first-team All-Big 12 quarterback last season, are evidence that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Nebraska has won three national championships with run-pass quarterbacks, and other Big 12 programs are following the Cornhuskers' lead.

Colorado, which didn't commit to a starter in spring practice, will choose between Jeremy Weisinger, Adam Bledsoe and Mike Moschetti. Oklahoma State has Tony Lindsay. Oklahoma is returning to the option under the direction of Brandon Daniels. And Baylor is going with Odell James, who is finally healthy after undergoing reconstructive knee surgery two years ago.

Both James and Jones were offered scholarships by Nebraska, which has turned over its multifaceted option offense to multi-talented sophomore Bobby Newcombe.



Jon Waller

Behind converted wingback Bobby Newcombe, the Big 12's best team, Nebraska, will once again put an otherwise undefeated Kansas State's post-game celebration on hold.



Doug DeVoe

defending national champion. But this could be Kansas State's season, at long last.

The hitch is that the Wildcats have not defeated Nebraska since 1968. The 29 consecutive losses prompted former Cornhusker All-American defensive tackle Jason Peter to remark after last season's 56-26 Nebraska victory: "They still don't know if they can beat us, in the back of their minds."

"We're still Nebraska, and they're still Kansas State," he said.

One of the reasons for optimism in Manhattan, Kan., is the fact that Kansas State will be more the team it

Kansas State is the presence of Bishop, who could be the best at what is arguably the conference's showcase position. Even though Texas tailback Ricky Williams, who decided not to declare for the NFL draft, is a preseason favorite to win the Heisman Trophy, Bishop, whom Kansas State is promoting for the Heisman, tops an impressive list of quarterbacks.

Missouri kicked off its Heisman campaign for Corby Jones in its Holiday Bowl guide, which included a game-action photograph of Jones running in a Heisman Trophy-like pose.

Iowa State's Todd Bandhauer and Texas A&M's Branndon Stewart are the best of the conference's more traditional drop-back passers, although Oklahoma State will have a good one to go with Lindsay when Matt Holliday arrives in the fall. Holliday, whose father, Tom, is the head baseball coach at Oklahoma State, is a candidate for a redshirt because the Cowboys also have Chris Chalmers and B.J. Tiger, giving Oklahoma State the deepest quarterbacking unit in the Big 12.

Kansas and Texas will rely on controlled passing attacks directed by Zac Wegner and Richard Walton, respectively. Texas Tech's quarterback is 6-

foot-3, 236-pound Rob Peters, who has the size of a dropback passer but runs like a fullback — a position he once played for the Red Raiders.

Williams, who needs only 289 yards to surpass Earl Campbell as the Longhorns' career rushing leader, will be hard-pressed to duplicate a junior season in which he rushed for a nation-leading 1,893 yards. He might have a difficult time just repeating as the conference's rushing leader.

Oklahoma's De'Mond Parker and Iowa State's Darren Davis both rushed for more than 1,000 yards last season, despite being slowed by injuries, and Nebraska's DeAngelo Evans returns after sitting out all of last season because of a severe pelvic-related

Devlin West is bigger and stronger than he was a year ago. Texas A&M has a wealth of proven ball carriers, including Dante Hall, Sirr Parker and Tiki Hardeman. And Kansas State's Eric Hickson has been granted another season of eligibility.

Hickson and Marlon Charles, also a veteran running back, will be pushed for playing time by much-publicized junior college transfer Frank Murphy, who enrolled in time to participate in spring practice.

Kansas State and Nebraska ranked fourth and fifth in the nation, respectively, in total defense last season, and there's no reason to expect a defensive drop-off from either team in 1998.

The Wildcats have an outstanding trio of linebackers in Jeff Kelly, Travis Ochs and Mark Simoneau. Plus, Turelle Williams, a starter before being sidelined by injury, returns.

Although Wistrom left as a first-round NFL draft pick, rush end

cornerback Ralph Brown, a two-year starter, and rover Mike Brown, the team's leading tackler last season, are among candidates for postseason honors.

On offense, in addition to Evans and Newcombe, Nebraska has depth at wide receiver and the best fullback in the conference, if not the country — versatile Joel Makovicka. The senior from tiny Brainard, Neb., can run with the ball and catch it as well as block for others.

The Cornhuskers also have one of the nation's best place-kickers in Kris Brown, who will challenge Kansas State's Martin Gramatica, the 1997 Lou Groza Award winner, for All-America honors.

Kansas State plays Nebraska at Manhattan on Nov. 14, another reason for optimism that this might be the sea-

In the battle of the brothers and defensive coordinators, Rob Ryan (below) goes to 1-0 over Rex in a classic Bedlam contest in Stillwater.

Doug DeVoe



Lisa Hall



Bob Beauvais

Time will run out on Missouri's Cinderella climb back to the top of the North Division after getting stampeded by a rejuvenated Colorado.

injury that threatened his career.

A healthy Evans will benefit from an offensive system that has led the nation in rushing 11 times in the last 18 seasons and has finished lower than third nationally in rushing only once during that time. That's providing the Cornhuskers are able to rebuild an offensive line around only one returning starter.

Oklahoma State again will alternate Nathan Simmons and Jamaal Fobbs. Colorado has Marlon Barnes and Dwayne Cherrington returning, plus newcomer Damion Barton. Missouri's

remains a high-profile position for the Cornhuskers, with Chad Kelsay, Mike Rucker and Kyle Vanden Bosch returning.

Being able to stop the run is essential for success in the Big 12, and Nebraska was the best at that last season, leading the conference and ranking third nationally in rushing defense.

There is no reason to expect a significant drop-off by the Cornhuskers, even though depth at defensive tackle behind Jason Wiltz and Steve Warren remains a concern going into the fall.

Nebraska's linebackers, though less publicized than Kansas State's, can hold their own, and the Cornhusker secondary is as good as any in the conference, with only one new starter.

Middle linebacker Jay Foreman,

son the Wildcats break the Cornhuskers' spell. In recent seasons, the teams have played early in the conference schedule, before Kansas State has had an opportunity to build momentum.

That won't be the case this time around. KSU and NU will have played nine and 10 games, respectively.

The Wildcats have a favorable schedule featuring seven home games, including six of the first seven. Their most difficult road game probably will be the regular season finale against Missouri. Kansas State's nonconfer-

ence schedule — Indiana State, Northern Illinois and Northeast Louisiana State — is arguably the Big 12's weakest, however, and as such, might not prepare the Wildcats for what follows.

Missouri and Colorado, which plays at Columbia on Nov. 7, figure to battle for third in the North, with Kansas and Iowa State trying to push one another into the divisional cellar.

Defensively, Missouri needs to get bigger and stronger. Offensively, the Tigers have an abundance of proven receivers, including speedy Kent Layman and tight end Eddie Brooks.

Colorado must shore up a defense that ranked 97th nationally against the run, a task complicated to some extent by an ACL injury suffered by tackle Aaron Marshall during the spring. Marshall, a starter, might not return until conference play begins. Outside linebacker Hannibal Navies is among the Big 12's best defenders.

The Buffaloes continue to talk about an improved

junior college transfers.

Texas A&M again should represent the South Division in the Big 12 championship game, which returns to St. Louis. The Aggies, who open against Florida State in the Kickoff Classic, are inexperienced in the offensive and defensive lines, but appear solid just about everywhere else.

Oklahoma State lost its three best defensive players — cornerbacks R.W. McQuarters and Kevin Williams and tackle Jamal Williams — and tight end Alonzo Mayes. But linebacker Raymond Cato is among a handful of Cowboys who have returned after being suspended last season.

Oklahoma State gets Texas A&M in Stillwater, but the Cowboys moved their "home" game against Nebraska

nationally in scoring defense.

That wasn't for lack of effort by tackle Kelly Gregg, however. He's among the Big 12's best.

Offensively, the Sooners are banking on Daniels' ability to run the option. The 5-10, 217-pound junior, who was tried at safety and wide receiver before settling in at quarterback, was impressive in the spring, rushing for 497 yards on 31 carries for an average of 16 yards per carry.

Texas Tech also has a Ricky Williams, a sophomore tailback who set a Red Raider freshman record in 1997 by rushing for 894 yards. He'll be the focus of the offense along with split end Donnie Hart.

The Red Raider defense is built around ends Montae Reagor and

Texas will make some noise behind Ricky Williams, but will be left in the dark with Texas Tech as Brannndon Stewart propels A&M to a showdown with Nebraska in St. Louis, Mo., for the Big 12 title.

Doug DeVoe



Bob Beavins

running game, but they have yet to produce one. Last season, they ranked 69th nationally in rushing, averaging only 135.5 yards per game. They also must eliminate mistakes. Colorado was penalized 92 times for 882 yards in 1997.

Kansas has had more time to learn coach Terry Allen's West Coast offense, but the Jayhawks have had to rebuild their defense. Iowa State's offensive focus will be to keep Davis and Bandhauer healthy.

The Cyclones ranked No. 101 in total defense and No. 110 in scoring defense nationally last season. Considering there were only 112 NCAA Division I-A teams, the Cyclones are bound to improve. In hopes of doing that, they recruited 18

to Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, and OSU must also play Kansas State on the road.

Texas has the only new head coach in the conference, a new defensive coordinator and a renewed enthusiasm for football — the Longhorns' spring game drew a record crowd of 21,000.

Coach Mack Brown has installed a control-passing offense to complement Williams, and Carl Reese, the new defensive coordinator, is restructuring a defense that ranked 104th nationally against the run last season. Middle linebacker Dusty Renfro is among the Longhorns' defensive leaders.

Oklahoma also has a new defensive coordinator and scheme. Rex Ryan, the brother of Oklahoma State defensive coordinator Rob Ryan, has installed an attacking "46" defense. The Sooners couldn't keep opponents out of the end zone last season, ranking 90th

Taurus Rucker.

Baylor will be hard-pressed to finish higher than sixth in the South. Even so, coach Dave Roberts hasn't compromised on discipline, suspending a couple of potential starters.

A positive, albeit a small one, is that Baylor doesn't play Nebraska this season because of the Big 12's interdivisional scheduling. The Cornhuskers will again be the class of the conference.

Even so, Kansas State has a chance. "We've not amazed by Nebraska, and we don't feel inferior," KSU linebacker Ochs said before the teams played last season in Lincoln.

"But we haven't beaten them."

And the Wildcats must prove they can. ■



Bob Beavins

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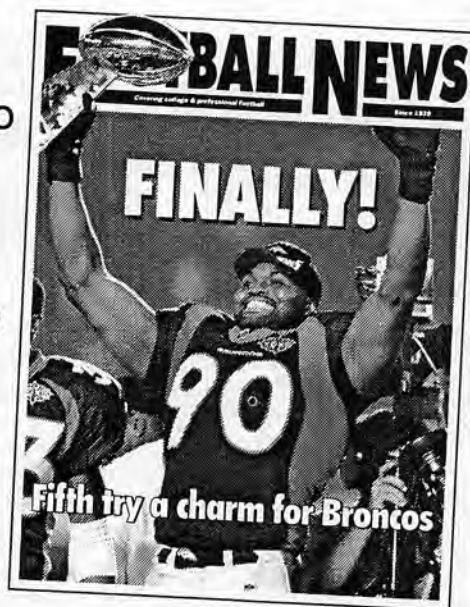
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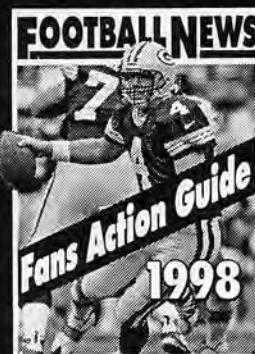
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**Colorado****Iowa State****Kansas****Kansas State****Missouri****Nebraska**

Aug 29						vs. Louisiana Tech*
Sep 5	@ Colo. St.**	TCU	Illinois St.	Indiana St.	Bowling Green	UAB
Sep 12	Fresno St.	@ Iowa	@ Missouri	No. Illinois	Kansas	@ California
Sep 19	Utah St.	Ball State		Texas	@ Ohio	
Sep 26	Baylor	Texas Tech	@ UAB	N.E. Louisiana		Washington
Oct 3	@ Oklahoma	@ Texas	Texas A&M		N.W. State (LA.)	@ Oklahoma St.***
Oct 10	Kansas St.	Missouri	@ Baylor	@ Colorado	@ Iowa St.	@ Texas A&M
Oct 17	Texas Tech		@ Nebraska	Oklahoma St.	Oklahoma	Kansas
Oct 24	@ Kansas	@ Kansas St.	Colorado	Iowa St.	@ Nebraska	Missouri
Oct 31		@ Oklahoma	Kansas St.	@ Kansas	@ Texas Tech	Texas
Nov 7	@ Missouri	Nebraska	North Texas	@ Baylor	Colorado	@ Iowa St.
Nov 14	Iowa St.	@ Colorado	Oklahoma St.	Nebraska	@ Texas A&M	@ Kansas St.
Nov 21		Kansas	@ Iowa St.	@ Missouri	Kansas St.	
Nov 27	@ Nebraska					Colorado

**Baylor****Oklahoma****Oklahoma State****Texas****Texas A&M****Texas Tech**

Aug 31						vs. Florida St.*****
Sep 5		North Texas	@ Kansas	New Mex. St.		UTEP
Sep 12	@ Oregon St.	@ TCU	@ Tulsa	@ UCLA	Louisiana Tech	@ North Texas
Sep 19	No. Carolina St.	California	Miss. St.	@ Kansas St.	@ So. Miss	Fresno St.
Sep 26	@ Colorado		SW Louisiana	Rice	North Texas	@ Iowa St.
Oct 3	@ Texas Tech	Colorado	Nebraska***	Iowa St.	@ Kansas	Baylor
Oct 10	Kansas	Texas****	@ Texas Tech	@ Oklahoma****	Nebraska	Oklahoma St.
Oct 17	Texas A&M	@ Missouri	@ Kansas St.		@ Baylor	@ Colorado
Oct 24	@ Texas	@ Oklahoma St.	Oklahoma	Baylor	Texas Tech	@ Texas A&M
Oct 31	@ Notre Dame	Iowa St.	Texas A&M	@ Nebraska	@ Oklahoma St.	Missouri
Nov 7	Kansas St.	@ Texas A&M	@ Texas	Oklahoma St.	Oklahoma	
Nov 14	Oklahoma	@ Baylor		@ Texas Tech	Missouri	Texas
Nov 21	@ Oklahoma St.	Texas Tech	Baylor			@ Oklahoma
Nov 27				Texas A&M	@ Texas	

*Eddie Robinson Football Classic • Lincoln, Neb.

**Mile High Stadium • Denver, Colo.

***Arrowhead Stadium • Kansas City, Mo.

****Cotton Bowl • Dallas, Texas

*****Kickoff Classic • East Rutherford, N.J.

In Review 1997 Season

BIG 12 CONFERENCE



FINAL STANDINGS

CONFERENCE						OVERALL				
	W	L	PCT.	PF	PA	W	L	PCT.	PF	PA
North Division										
Nebraska	8	0	1.000	387	127	13	0	1.000	607	211
Kansas State	7	1	.875	255	132	11	1	.917	418	177
Missouri	5	3	.625	272	256	7	5	.583	392	367
Colorado	3	5	.375	246	228	5	6	.455	300	295
Kansas	3	5	.375	129	235	5	6	.455	177	279
Iowa State	1	7	.125	155	321	1	10	.091	210	493
South Division										
Texas A&M	6	2	.750	246	137	9	4	.692	445	236
Texas Tech	5	3	.625	142	121	6	5	.545	245	217
Oklahoma State	5	3	.625	228	204	8	4	.667	352	233
Texas	2	6	.250	194	255	4	7	.364	283	366
Oklahoma	2	6	.250	125	267	4	8	.333	232	379
Baylor	1	7	.125	146	257	2	9	.182	200	375

POSTSEASON ACTION

Big 12 Championship Game

Nebraska 54, Texas A&M 15

Builders Square Alamo Bowl

Purdue 33, Oklahoma State 20

Plymouth Holiday Bowl

Colorado State 35, Missouri 24

Federal Express Orange Bowl

Nebraska 42, Tennessee 17

Southwestern Bell Cotton Bowl

UCLA 29, Texas A&M 23

Tostitos Fiesta Bowl

Kansas State 35, Syracuse 18

TEAM STATISTICS

(National rankings in parentheses)

RUSHING OFFENSE

	G	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD	YPG
1. NU (1)	11	688	4376	6.4	60	397.8
2. MU (6)	11	592	2899	4.9	35	263.5
3. OSU (10)	11	592	2486	4.2	25	226.0
4. A&M (11)	11	469	2452	5.2	34	222.9
5. KSU (13)	11	541	2422	4.5	29	220.2
6. OU (20)	12	591	2491	4.2	25	207.6
7. UT (22)	11	412	2216	5.4	28	201.5
8. BAY (29)	11	462	2039	4.4	16	185.4
9. TT (55)	11	455	1654	3.6	16	150.4
10. CU (69)	11	363	1491	4.1	20	135.5
11. KU (92)	11	411	1266	3.1	9	115.1
12. ISU (103)	11	397	1028	2.6	6	93.5

RUSHING DEFENSE

	G	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD	YPG
1. NU (4)	11	384	868	2.3	12	78.9
2. OSU (20)	11	369	1247	3.4	14	113.4
3. KSU (36)	11	463	1429	3.1	13	129.9
4. TT (46)	11	467	1511	3.2	11	137.4
5. A&M (56)	11	501	1642	3.3	13	149.3
6. OU (85)	12	519	2235	4.3	28	186.3
7. MU (92)	11	432	2131	4.9	29	193.7
8. CU (97)	11	546	2235	4.1	19	203.2
9. KU (98)	11	546	2270	4.2	21	206.4
10. UT (104)	11	561	2657	4.7	31	241.5
11. ISU (106)	11	505	2717	5.4	42	247.0
12. BAY (110)	11	520	3028	5.8	32	275.3

PASSING OFFENSE

	G	AT	CP	IT	PCT	YDS	YPA	TD	YPG
1. CU (35)	11	352	188	16	53.4	2556	7.3	14	232.4
2. ISU (37)	11	386	184	11	47.7	2551	6.6	20	231.9
3. UT (69)	11	349	177	17	50.7	2157	6.2	7	196.1
4. A&M (88)	11	235	139	2	59.1	1768	7.5	11	160.7
5. TT (89)	11	277	142	6	51.3	1747	6.3	7	158.8
6. MU (92)	11	195	104	6	53.3	1723	8.8	12	156.6
7. KSU (95)	11	204	88	9	43.1	1674	8.2	14	152.2
8. BAY (96)	11	276	150	10	54.3	1656	6.0	7	150.5
9. OSU (97)	11	201	114	8	56.7	1647	8.2	14	149.7
10. OU (102)	12	209	103	15	49.3	1533	7.3	3	127.8
11. KU (103)	11	219	98	8	44.7	1389	6.3	5	126.3
12. NU (107)	11	164	87	4	53.0	1252	7.6	5	113.8

PASS EFFICIENCY DEFENSE

	G	ATT	CMP	YDS	TD	INT	YPG
1. KSU (6)	11	239	99	1396	4	5	91.8
2. A&M (8)	11	277	143	1603	3	11	95.9
3. OSU (26)	11	309	149	2083	12	15	108.0
4. NU (42)	11	262	124	1943	12	10	117.1
5. KU (44)	11	256	141	1706	10	8	117.7
6. TT (46)	11	298	159	2038	15	13	118.7
7. MU (47)	11	285	136	2121	16	14	118.9
8. CU (48)	11	225	120	1623	11	12	119.4
9. OU (60)	12	302	166	2119	12	6	123.0
10. UT (75)	11	204	104	1734	10	6	132.7
11. BAY (84)	11	238	135	1787	14	4	135.8
12. ISU (107)	11	250	157	2120	17	4	153.3

TOTAL OFFENSE

	G	PLYS	YDS	AVG	TD	YPG
1. NU (1)	11	852	5628	6.6	65	511.64
2. MU (21)	11	787	4622	5.9	47	420.18
3. UT (39)	11	761	4373	5.7	35	397.55
4. A&M (46)	11	704	4220	6.0	45	383.64
5. OSU (52)	11	793	4133	5.2	39	375.73
6. KSU (54)	11	745	4096	5.5	43	372.36
7. CU (56)	11	715	4047	5.7	34	367.91
8. BAY (73)	11	738	3695	5.0	23	335.91
9. OU (75)	12	800	4024	5.0	28	335.33
10. ISU (83)	11	783	3579	4.6	26	325.36
11. TT (92)	11	732	3401	4.6	23	309.18
12. KU (112)	11	630	2655	4.2	14	241.36

TOTAL DEFENSE

	G	PLYS	YDS	AVG	TD	YPG
1. NU (4)	11	646	2811	4.4	24	255.5
2. KSU (5)	11	702	2825	4.0	17	256.8
3. A&M (13)	11	778	3245	4.2	16	295.0
4. OSU (15)	11	678	3330	4.9	26	302.7
5. TT (22)	11	765	3549	4.6	26	322.6
6. CU (46)	11	771	3858	5.0	30	350.7
7. KU (56)	11	802	3976	5.0	31	361.5
8. OU (57)	12	821	4354	5.3	40	362.8
9. MU (76)	11	717	4252	5.9	45	386.5
10. UT (85)	11	765	4391	5.7	41	399.2
11. BAY (99)	11	758	4815	6.4	46	437.7
12. ISU (101)	11	755	4837	6.4	59	439.7

SCORING OFFENSE

PAT DXPT										
	G	PTS	AVG	TD	K	P	K	P	FG	SF
1. NU (1)	11	511	46.5	67	65	0	0	0	14	1
2. A&M (8)	11	407	37.0	51	48	1	0	0	17	0
3. KSU (13)	11	383	34.8	47	40	1	0	0	19	1
4. MU (20)	11	368	33.5	48	43	2	0	0	11	0
5. OSU (32)	11	332	30.2	41	33	4	0	0	15	0
6. CU (47)	11	300	27.3	38	29	2	0	0	13	0
7. UT (55)	11	283	25.7	35	26	4	0	0	13	0
8. TT (71)	11	245	22.3	29	26	1	0	0	13	2
9. ISU (92)	11	214	19.5	27	23	1	0	0	9	0
10. OU (94)	12	232	19.3	30	22	2	1	0	8	0
11. BAY (97)	11	200	18.2	25	23	0	0	0	9	0
12. KU (103)	11	177	16.1	21	18	0	0	0	11	0

SCORING DEFENSE

	G	PTS	AVG	TD	KXP	OXF	FG	SF
1. A&M (6)	11	153	13.9	16	12	0	15	0
2. KSU (7)	11	159	14.5	19	13	2	8	2
3. NU (13)	11	182	16.5	25	21	1	3	0
4. OSU (20)	11	200	18.2	27	21	4	3	0
5. TT (31)	11	217	19.7	27	22	0	11	0
6. KU (60)	11	279	25.4	35	32	2	11	0
7. CU (70)	11	295	26.8	32	31	0	24	0
8. MU (84)	11	332	30.2	45	34	2	8	0
9. OU (90)	12	379	31.6	45	35	4	22	0
10. UT (96)	11	366	33.3	45	43	1	17	0
11. BAY (99)	11	375	34.1	50	47	2	8	0
12. ISU (110)	11	493	44.8	68	65	1	6	0

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

(National rankings in parentheses/ 1998 returners italicized)

RUSHING

Player, School, Class (Ranking)	G	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD	YPG
1. <i>Ricky Williams</i> , UT, Jr. (1)	11	279	1893	6.8	25	172.09
2. <i>Ahman Green</i> , NU, Jr. (2)	11	244	1698	7.0	19	154.36
3. <i>De'Mond Parker</i> , OU, So. (8)	9	194	1143	5.9	6	127.00
4. <i>Darren Davis</i> , ISU, So. (15)	9	212	1005	4.7	5	111.67
5. <i>Scott Frost</i> , NU, Sr. (33)	11	161	1016	6.3	17	92.36
6. <i>Dante Hall</i> , A&M, So. (41)	11	131	968	7.4	9	88.00
7. <i>Ricky Williams</i> , TT, Fr.	11	201	894	4.4	3	81.27
8. <i>Corby Jones</i> , MU, Jr.	11	183	887	4.8	14	80.64
9. <i>Jamaal Fobbs</i> , OSU, Fr.	11	161	846	5.3	3	76.91
10. <i>Eric Vann</i> , KU, Sr.	11	196	796	4.1	6	72.36
11. <i>Nathan Simmons</i> , OSU, So.	10	166	711	4.3	5	71.10
12. <i>Sirr Parker</i> , A&M, Jr.	11	139	772	5.6	10	70.18

PASSING EFFICIENCY

(Min. Five Attempts Per Game)							RATING	
Player, School, Class (Ranking)	G	AT	CP	PCT	I	YDS	TD	PTS
1. Tony Lindsay, OSU, Fr.	11	123	76	61.79	5	1172	9	157.8
2. Corby Jones, MU, Jr. (22)	11	191	102	53.40	6	1658	12	140.8
3. Branddon Stewart, A&M, Sr.	11	158	93	58.86	2	1202	9	139.0
4. Randy McCown, A&M, So.	9	75	45	60.00	0	565	2	132.1
5. Michael Bishop, KSU, Jr. (42)	11	185	80	43.24	8	1557	13	128.5
6. Scott Frost, NU, Sr.	11	141	76	53.90	4	1036	5	121.6
7. John Hessler, CU, Sr.	11	338	181	53.55	16	2478	14	119.3
8. Todd Bandhauer, ISU, Jr.	11	374	180	48.13	9	2514	20	117.4
9. Justin Fuente, OU, So.	12	129	69	53.49	8	1018	2	112.5
10. Chris Chaloupka, OSU, So.	11	74	35	47.30	2	420	5	111.9
11. Zebbie Lethridge, TT, Sr.	11	261	134	51.34	4	1622	6	108.1
12. Jeff Watson, BAY, Sr.	11	260	143	55.00	8	1550	5	105.3

RECEPTIONS PER GAME

Player, School, Class (Ranking)	G	CT	YDS	TD	CPG	YPC
1. <i>Tyrone Watley</i> , ISU, Sr.	11	50	827	8	4.55	16.54
2. <i>Phil Savoy</i> , CU, Sr.	10	43	659	5	4.30	15.33
3. <i>Malcolm McKenzie</i> , TT, Sr.	11	42	462	2	3.82	11.00
4. <i>Ed Williams</i> , ISU, Sr.	11	39	533	5	3.55	13.67
5. <i>Darrin Chiaverini</i> , CU, Jr.	11	35	461	0	3.18	13.17
6. <i>Derrius Thompson</i> , BAY, Jr.	11	32	420	1	2.91	13.13
7. <i>Alonzo Mayes</i> , OSU, Sr.	10	29	424	7	2.90	14.62
8. <i>Morris Anderson</i> , BAY, Jr.	11	27	315	3	2.45	11.67
9. <i>Stephen Alexander</i> , OU, Sr.	12	29	450	1	2.42	15.52
10. <i>Kwame Cavil</i> , UT, Fr.	10	23	316	1	2.30	13.74
11. <i>Marcus Stiggers</i> , CU, So.	11	25	357	4	2.27	14.28
12. <i>Mo Little</i> , OU, Sr.	12	27	390	1	2.25	14.44

ALL-PURPOSE RUNNERS

Player, School, Class (Ranking)	G	RUN	REC	PR	KO	YDS	YPG
1. <i>Ricky Williams</i> , UT, Jr. (2)	11	1893	150	0	0	2043	185.73
2. <i>Ahman Green</i> , NU, Jr. (11)	11	1698	89	0	0	1787	162.45
3. <i>Tyrone Watley</i> , ISU, Sr. (16)	11	0	827	12	852	1691	153.73
4. <i>De'Mond Parker</i> , OU, So. (21)	9	1143	140	0	0	1283	142.56
5. <i>Darren Davis</i> , ISU, So. (41)	9	1005	130	0	0	1135	126.11
6. <i>Dante Hall</i> , A&M, So. (49)	11	968	79	182	101	1330	120.91
7. <i>Ricky Williams</i> , TT, Fr.	11	894	130	0	212	1236	112.36
8. <i>Sirr Parker</i> , A&M, Jr.	11	772	194	0	135	1101	100.09
9. <i>R.W. McQuarters</i> , OSU, Jr.	11	69	245	521	195	1032	93.82
10. <i>Scott Frost</i> , NU, Sr.	11	1016	0	0	0	1016	92.36
11. <i>Jerod Douglas</i> , BAY, Sr.	11	557	165	23	263	1008	91.64
12. <i>Jamaal Fobbs</i> , OSU, Fr.	11	846	139	0	0	985	89.55

RECEIVING YARDS PER GAME

Player, School, Class (Ranking)	G	CT	YDS	TD	YPG	CPG	YPC
1. <i>Tyrone Watley</i> , ISU, Sr. (44)	11	50	827	8	75.18	4.55	16.54
2. <i>Phil Savoy</i> , CU, Sr.	10	43	659	5	65.90	4.30	15.33
3. <i>Kent Layman</i> , MU, So.	11	21	534	4	48.55	1.91	25.43
4. <i>Ed Williams</i> , ISU, Sr.	11	39	533	5	48.45	3.55	13.67
5. <i>Alonzo Mayes</i> , OSU, Sr.	10	29	424	7	42.40	2.90	14.62
6. <i>Malcolm McKenzie</i> , TT, Sr.	11	42	462	2	42.00	3.82	11.00
7. <i>Darrin Chiaverini</i> , CU, Jr.	11	35	461	0	41.91	3.18	13.17
8. <i>Darnell McDonald</i> , KSU, Jr.	11	21	441	6	40.09	1.91	21.00
9. <i>Derrius Thompson</i> , BAY, Jr.	11	32	420	1	38.18	2.91	13.13
10. <i>Stephen Alexander</i> , OU, Sr.	12	29	450	1	37.50	2.42	15.52
11. <i>Gavin Peries</i> , KSU, Jr.	11	19	404	3	36.73	1.73	21.26
12. <i>Daman Green</i> , ISU, Sr.	10	21	366	2	36.60	2.10	17.43

TOTAL OFFENSE

Player, School, Class (Ranking)	G	RUSH		PASS		TOTAL	
		AT	YDS	AT	YDS	YDS	YPG
1. John Hessler, CU, Sr. (25)	11	75	188	338	2478	2666	242.36
2. Corby Jones, MU, Jr. (30)	11	183	887	191	1658	2545	231.36
3. Todd Bandhauer, ISU, Jr. (44)	11	61	-379	374	2514	2135	194.09
4. Michael Bishop, KSU, (46)	11	147	566	185	1557	2123	193.00
5. Scott Frost, NU, Sr.	11	161	1016	141	1036	2052	186.55
6. Ricky Williams, UT, Jr.	11	279	1893	1	27	1920	174.55
7. James Brown, UT, Sr.	10	41	29	267	1676	1705	170.50
8. Zebbie Lethridge, TT, Sr.	11	107	133	261	1622	1755	159.55
9. Tony Lindsay, OSU, Fr.	11	151	564	123	1172	1736	157.82
10. Ahman Green, NU, Jr.	11	244	1698	0	0	1698	154.36
11. Jeff Watson, BAY, Sr.	11	76	43	260	1550	1593	144.82
12. De'Mond Parker, OU, So.	9	194	1143	0	0	1143	127.00

SCORING

Player, School, Class (Ranking)	G	TD	XP	FG	PTS	PTPG
1. <i>Ricky Williams</i> , UT, Jr. (1)	11	25	2	0	152	13.82
2. <i>Ahman Green</i> , NU, Jr. (6)	11	19	0	0	114	10.36
3. <i>Scott Frost</i> , NU, Sr. (16)	11	17	0	0	102	9.27
4. <i>Kris Brown</i> , NU, Jr. (17)	11	0	57	14	99	9.00
4. <i>Kyle Bryant</i> , A&M, Sr. (17)	11	0	48	17	99	9.00
6. <i>Martin Gramatica</i> , KSU, Jr. (25)	11	0	37	19	94	8.55
7. <i>Corby Jones</i> , MU, Jr. (30)	11	14	0	0	84	7.64
8. <i>Scott Knickman</i> , MU, Sr. (46)	11	0	43	11	76	6.91
9. <i>Brock Olivo</i> , MU, Sr.	11	12	0	0	72	6.55
10. <i>Jeremy Aldrich</i> , CU, So.	10	0	29	12	65	6.50
11. <i>Tim Sydnies</i> , OSU, So.	11	0	23	15	68	6.18
11. <i>Sirr Parker</i> , A&M, Jr.	11	11	2	0	68	6.18

INTERCEPTIONS

Player, School, Class (Ranking)	G	NO	YDS	TD	IPG
1. <i>Kevin Williams</i> , OSU, Sr. (10)	11	6	107	1	.55
2. <i>Harold Piersey</i> , MU, Jr. (22)	11	5	51	0	.45
3. <i>Patrick Brown</i> , KU, Jr.	11	3	74	2	.27
3. <i>Jamie Harris</i> , KU, Jr.	11	3	64	0	.27
3. <i>Sedrick Curry</i> , A&M, So.	11	3	62	0	.27
3. <i>Marcus Washington</i> , CU, Jr.	11	3	43	1	.27
3. <i>Ryan Sutter</i> , CU, Sr.	11	3	34	1	.27
3. <i>Ricky Thompson</i> , OSU, Fr.	11	3	25	0	.27
3. <i>Aaron Humphrey</i> , UT, So.	11	3	15	0	.27
10. <i>Tony Darden</i> , TT, Sr.	10	2	0	0	.20
11. <i>Dustin Avey</i> , ISU, Fr.	11	2	94	1	.18
11. <i>Joe Walker</i> , NU, Fr.	11	2	71	1	.18

1997 FIRST-TEAM ALL-BIG 12 FOOTBALL

(Selections were unanimous Big 12 Coaches and Associated Press unless noted /1998 returners in bold/1997 classification shown)

OFFENSE

WR	<i>Phil Savoy</i> , Sr., Colorado (Coaches)
WR	<i>Tyrone Watley</i> , Sr., Iowa St.
TE	<i>Alonzo Mayes</i> , Sr., Okla. St.
OL	<i>Kendyl Jacox</i> , Sr., Kansas St. (Coaches)
OL	<i>Todd Weiner</i> , Sr., Kansas St.
OL	<i>Aaron Taylor</i> , Sr., Nebraska
OL	<i>Eric Anderson</i> , Sr., Nebraska
OL	<i>Mike Morris</i> , Sr., Missouri
OL	<i>Steve McKinney</i> , Sr., Texas A&M (AP)
QB	<i>Corby Jones</i> , Jr., Missouri
RB	<i>Ahman Green</i> , Jr., Nebraska
RB	<i>Ricky Williams</i> , Jr., Texas
RB	<i>De'Mond Parker</i> , So., Oklahoma (AP)
PK	<i>Martin Gramatica</i> , Jr., Kansas St.
KR	<i>Ben Kelly</i> , Fr., Colorado

DEFENSE

DE	<i>Grant Wistrom</i> , Sr., Nebraska
DE	<i>Montae Reagor</i> , Jr., Texas Tech
IL	<i>Ryan Olson</i> , Sr., Colorado (Coaches)
IL	<i>Jason Peter</i> , Sr., Nebraska
IL	<i>Jamel Williams</i> , Jr., Oklahoma St. (Coaches)
LB	<i>Ron Warner</i> , Sr., Kansas
LB	<i>Jeff Kelly</i> , Jr., Kansas State
LB	<i>Dat Nguyen</i> , Jr., Texas A&M
LB	<i>Mark Simoneau</i> , So., Kansas St. (AP)
DB	<i>Ralph Brown</i> , So., Nebraska
DB	<i>Kevin Williams</i> , Sr., Oklahoma St.
DB	<i>R.W. McQuarters</i> , Jr., Oklahoma St.
DB	<i>Dane Johnson</i> , Sr., Texas Tech (Coaches)
DB	<i>Ryan Sutter</i> , Sr., Colorado (AP)
P	<i>Shane Lechler</i> , So., Texas A&M

SPECIALTY HONORS

Coach of the Year

Bob Simmons, OSU (Coaches)
Larry Smith, MU (AP)

Offensive

Player of the Year

Ricky Williams, UT

Defensive

Player of the Year

Grant Wistrom, NU

Offensive

Newcomer of the Year

Michael Bishop, KSU

Defensive

Newcomer of the Year

Jeff Kelly, KSU

Offensive

Freshman of the Year

Tony Lindsay, OSU

Defensive

Freshman of the Year

Ben Kelly, CU

BIG 12 BREAKDOWN

RANKING EACH OF THE Big 12 teams by position is a lot like going to an all-you-can-eat buffet: There are so many options from which to choose that it's difficult to make a selection.

Such was our quandary when selecting the team with the best running backs in the conference. Sure, you have two Heisman contenders in Texas' Ricky Williams and Oklahoma's De'Mond Parker, but do their respective teams have the best group of running backs in the Big 12? (According to us, no.) At the quarterback position, there is more talent in the Big 12 than perhaps any other conference in the country. And with Kansas State, Oklahoma State, Texas A&M and Nebraska, choosing the Big 12 team with the best linebackers produced a serious amount of debate.

Faced with this task, the members of our panel debated the strengths and weaknesses of each team in the Big 12. Keep in mind that these rankings are based largely on returning players and post-spring reports, as it is difficult to measure the impact of incoming freshman and junior college transfers.

Several teams, in fact, are counting on freshman and JUCO productivity right off the bat. Not surprisingly, two of those teams are Iowa State and Baylor. Iowa State signed what was regarded as the best junior college class in the nation. Kansas State has been the model of JUCO success in the Big 12. Michael Bishop quarterbacked the Wildcats to an 11-1 record and a Fiesta Bowl victory after leading Blinn (Texas) College to a 24-0 record the previous two seasons. Kansas State is hoping that lightning will strike twice with its latest JUCO gem. Frank Murphy was the NJCAA National Player of the Year in 1997, and he will bring more firepower to an already explosive offense in Manhattan, Kan.

It is also extremely difficult to ignore history when determining these rankings. We know Nebraska's defensive line lost Lombardi Award winner Grant Wistrom and All-America defensive tackle Jason Peter, but hey, it's Nebraska.

Our All-Big 12 team is highlighted by some familiar names: Williams, Parker, Nguyen and Brown (twice). But there are also some players with whom fans outside of the Big 12 might not be as familiar. Kansas' Justin Glasgow is one of the top guards in the Big 12, and Colorado's Darrin Chiaverini has a pair of hands that could catch a small missile launched from 60 yards out.

We think our All-Big 12 team would match up pretty favorably against any All-(insert conference name here) team. We also think our rankings are sure to incite some arguments from college football fans. Whether you agree or disagree, one thing is for certain: With so many exciting players, Big 12 fans will have no problem getting their fill of excitement in 1998. ■

Huskers Illustrated '98 PRESEASON ALL-BIG 12 TEAM

OFFENSE

WR Donnie Hart, Sr., Texas Tech
WR Darrin Chiaverini, Sr., Colorado
TE Derrick Spiller, Sr., Texas A&M
OL Josh Heske, Sr., Nebraska
OL Justin Glasgow, Sr., Kansas
OL Todd Neimeyer, Sr., Missouri
OL Jay Humphrey, Sr., Texas
OL Ryan Young, Sr., Kansas St.
QB Corby Jones, Sr., Missouri
RB Ricky Williams, Sr., Texas
RB De'Mond Parker, Jr., Oklahoma
PK Kris Brown, Sr., Nebraska
KR Ben Kelly, Soph., Colorado

DEFENSE

DL Montae Reagor, Sr., Texas Tech
DL Mike Rucker, Sr., Nebraska
DL Kelly Gregg, Sr., Oklahoma
LB Hannibal Navies, Sr., Colorado
LB Jeff Kelly, Sr., Kansas St.
LB Dat Nguyen, Sr., Texas A&M
LB Kenyatta Wright, Sr., Oklahoma St.
DB Ralph Brown, Jr., Nebraska
DB Lamar Chapman, Jr., Kansas St.
DB Mike Brown, Jr., Nebraska
DB Harold Piersey, Sr., Missouri
P Shane Lechler, Jr., Texas A&M
PR David Allen, Soph., Kansas St.

QUARTERBACK



Missouri's **CORBY JONES**

KSU	Bishop wants to throw a Fiesta.
MU	Corby Jones-ing for Heisman.
OSU	Health of Lindsay a concern.
A&M	Brannndon's last stand.
NU	Big on talent, short on wins.
CU	Neuheisel might start himself.
ISU	And the Band(hauer) played on.
OU	Blake puts faith in Daniels.
UT	The eyes of Texas are on Walton.
BAY	Press clippings don't win games.
KU	Wegner + West Coast offense = ?
TT	Where's Zebbie?

DEFENSIVE LINE



Nebraska's **CHAD KELSAY**

NU	Lombardi Award prep program.
KSU	Wildcats' front seven is scary.
OU	Best defensive line in Blake era.
OSU	Cowboys lose J. Williams.
MU	Gibson gives line a rush.
UT	Hampton is back for the Horns.
A&M	Unproven line must step it up.
CU	Bufs hope Warren bulks up.
KU	Jayhawks need a spark.
TT	Reagor shines amid dim unit.
BAY	Bears held in Foster care.
ISU	Frosh DeRonde unseats senior.

RUNNING BACK



Texas A&M's SIRR PARKER

A&M	Yes, Sirr, Aggies are loaded.
UT	Ricky. Enough said.
OU	Is Parker best Sooner RB ever?
OSU	Cowboys start new tradition.
NU	RBs do grow on trees in Lincoln.
KSU	Runners get yards, not headlines.
TT	"Little" Ricky Williams is not bad.
ISU	Davis aims for big year in Ames.
CU	Who will lead Buffalo stampede?
MU	Tigers will head West for success.
KU	Anemic offense needs something.
BAY	Suspensions kill Bear backfield.

LINEBACKER



Oklahoma State's KENYATTA WRIGHT

KSU	It doesn't get any better than this.
OSU	Wright leads talented group.
A&M	Can Dat do it again?
NU	Foreman ready for big senior year.
CU	Navies is as tough as his name.
OU	Is Ontei Jones the real deal?
MU	Gibson gets a rush on outside.
KU	Can Caston fill Warner's shoes?
TT	Wishing Z. Thomas were here.
UT	If only they had three like Renfro.
BAY	The young and the restless.
ISU	JUCO — four hopeful letters.

RECEIVER



Colorado's DARRIN CHIAVERINI

CU	Watch for speeding Buffaloes.
KSU	McDonald is serious deep threat.
OSU	Nothing but Love for Cowboys.
NU	Experience reigns in Lincoln.
UT	Cavil co-stars in Wane's World.
OU	Will receiver be an option for OU?
A&M	Ags set for future with Freeman.
TT	Tech receivers have Hart.
MU	In Layman's terms, help is needed.
BAY	Closest deep threat is in Austin.
KU	Gordon back from heart ailment.
ISU	Who are these guys?

SECONDARY



Oklahoma's MIKE WOODS

NU	Big hitters abound.
MU	Easter is no bunny in secondary.
OU	Look out for Ivy in the Woods.
A&M	Always talented, often burned.
KSU	Unspectacular, but solid group.
CU	Small, but speedy.
UT	Secondary gets better with age.
OSU	Loss of McQuarters, Williams hurts.
ISU	Runk next freshman sensation.
BAY	Safeties provide corner insurance.
KU	Harris is Jayhawks' lone returner.
TT	Brown stands alone.

OFFENSIVE LINE



Kansas State's BRIEN HANLEY

UT	Gaskamp center of attention.
KSU	Right tackle needed; apply at KSU.
OSU	Getting better all the time.
NU	Losses will be felt, but not much.
MU	Tigers have size and experience.
CU	New QB can hide behind tackles.
KU	Most underrated unit in Big 12.
A&M	Youngsters must produce.
OU	Will new scheme mean old story?
TT	Run, Ricky, run.
BAY	JUCO transfers should help.
ISU	Davis will earn his yards in '98.

KICKING GAME



Texas Tech's JEREMY HERNANDEZ

KSU	Gramatica set to defend crown.
NU	Brown up to the challenge.
TT	Everything smooth with Greaser.
UT	Stockton will pull double-duty.
OSU	Sydnes must be more consistent.
CU	Thin air gives Aldrich a leg up.
BAY	Bryant has the leg if Bears need it.
A&M	Lechler and ...?
KU	Punting is a Royal concern.
ISU	Punter Gomez will be busy.
MU	Tigers need help.
OU	Oh, the humanity!

KANSAS STATE WILDCATS

They're talking title in this town.

Not coach Bill Snyder mind you, but everyone else is talking like this is the year that the Wildcats make a legitimate run at the Big 12 title — and subsequently a national title.

And why not?

The Wildcats went 11-1 last year and hammered Syracuse, 35-18, in the Fiesta Bowl. Michael Bishop tossed four touchdown passes in that game, completing 14-of-23 passes for 317 yards against a Syracuse team that had two defensive backs selected in the first round of the NFL draft. Wide receiver Darnell McDonald set a Fiesta Bowl record with seven catches, 206 yards and three touchdowns.

Nine of the 11 starters on that offense are returning.

The K-State defense was dominant, finishing fourth in the nation in total defense. The Wildcats averaged 4.6 sacks per game (second in the country behind Florida State) and held Texas A&M to minus-35 yards rushing — and this was an A&M team that averaged nearly 230 yards rushing in its other 10 games.

Nine of the 11 starters on that defense are returning.

Toss in All-American kicker Martin Gramatica and returners David Allen and Gerald Neasman and you start to understand the excitement here in mid-America.

For the first time since Snyder began building this program in 1989, the expectations might be higher than the achievement. Nothing short of a victory over Nebraska, a trip to the Big 12 championship game and a return engagement in the Fiesta Bowl will be acceptable.

"We are not going to talk about all those things we would like to achieve or what the ultimate achievement might be," said Snyder. "We are going to focus on what it takes to get where we want to be."

"For a nine-year period of time, that has been the theme,

year-in and year-out. We have always been in a position where we have made improvement from one year to the next. A major concern was always, 'Let's not fall back. Let's understand what it took to get here. Let's duplicate that. Let's get ourselves better.' "

Bishop is a great starting point. He is the most dangerous run-pass threat in the conference since Kordell Stewart left Colorado. He passed for 1,557 yards and 13 touchdowns last season, playing his first game just four weeks

after stepping onto the practice field. He is 35-1 as a starter in two years at Blinn Junior College and one year at Kansas State. But he completed just 43.2 percent of his passes last season.

His improvement from the end of the regular season to the bowl game was dramatic. With a full spring practice under his belt this year, he could be even better than he was a year ago.

"His mindset was to get the ball up the field," said Ron Hudson, offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach. "He saw what knowing the system better could do for him in the bowl game. Athletically, he has always been so gifted that no one ever demanded anything of him other than drop back and throw it to that guy. If that guy wasn't open, run

it."

Bishop may not have to do that as much this season. All of Kansas State's receivers are back. If Bishop isn't

winging it downfield, he'll have plenty of guys in the backfield to hand it off to. Eric Hickson, the Wildcats' leading rusher last year, was granted an injury hardship and is back for a sixth season. He is 630 yards from becoming Kansas State's all-time leading rusher.

But the man who has Wildcats buzzing is JUCO transfer Frank Murphy. He was the NJCAA National Player of the Year in 1997. He was clocked at 4.21 in the 40-yard dash on

Doug DeVoe



Michael Bishop hopes to avenge his only loss as a college quarterback when the Wildcats face Nebraska in a Big 12 showdown in Manhattan.

Kansas State's testing day, making him the fastest player ever at the school.

"We haven't had a chance to find out what Frank can do," Snyder said. "But he gives us more speed than at any time I can think of at that position."

The biggest concern is whether they can replace two important cogs on the offensive line. Left tackle Todd Weiner was drafted by the Seattle Seahawks. Even late in spring practice, Kansas State was experimenting with who would fill that spot. Randall Cummins was the front-runner to replace Kendyl Jacox at center.

On the defensive side, the Wildcats have the best trio of linebackers in the conference — perhaps in the country. Middle linebacker Jeff Kelly was the Defensive Newcomer of the Year and an All-Big 12 performer. Mark Simoneau also was on the All-Big 12 first team. Travis Ochs was a second-team pick and MVP of the Fiesta Bowl.

The linebackers will play behind a line that is missing just one starter from last season. Damion McIntosh and Andrae Rowe started 13 games between them. Darren Howard, after getting off to a slow start, finished with 11 quarterback sacks.

The secondary will have to find a replacement for Demetric Denmark, but Adrian Beard is healthy after suffering a season-ending knee injury in the opener last year.

That primarily leaves depth as a problem, and Snyder is worried about that. Talented backups are available, but they don't have much experience.

"We have, perhaps, depth in some cases," Snyder said. "We have young guys who were number two and did not play a great deal. All of a sudden, this spring they are still number twos because of the number of returning starters. They still have not played. They probably won't get as much practice time."

As much as those in Wildcat land talk of a title, Kansas State still must get past Nebraska, a team it has not beaten since 1968. Instead of playing them early in the season as they have in nine of the past 10 years, Kansas State gets the Cornhuskers at home late in the year, which is when the Wildcats traditionally play their best football.

Does the title talk concern Snyder? Not in the least.

"I don't think it is a bad thing," Snyder said. "I don't think Florida State or Nebraska or any of that elite group would deny or show disapproval of being ranked relatively high. You just accept it."

"But we understand it is meaningless right now. We can't control it, so we just move on. My focus is on how you get there. I am a strong believer in, 'Let's find out what it is going to take to be the best you can be, and let's focus on those things.' " ■ — By Kent Pulliam



Doug DeVoe

After registering 103 stops as a sophomore in 1997, Mark Simoneau will have opponents thinking twice before running his direction this season.



AT A GLANCE

PROJECTED 1998 FINISH:

2nd

NORTH DIVISION

STRENGTHS

Quarterback **Michael Bishop** lit it up in the Fiesta Bowl, completing 14-of-23 attempts for 317 yards. His completion percentage was a huge improvement from the regular season and reflects an extra month of practice. Give him a spring practice and fall workouts, and he could really light it up this fall.

WEAKNESSES

Although they return 18 starters, the Wildcats left spring practice without a sure thing at left tackle. Right tackle **Ryan Young** could be moved or defensive lineman **Damion McIntosh** could pull double duty, playing on the offensive side as he did a year ago when the 'Cats were in a pinch.

STAYING IN FOCUS

The Wildcats can't forget what got them into the Bowl Alliance last year: hard work and a good performance on the field. Having a top-10 team on paper won't put them where they want to be in late November.

CARRY GO ROUND

Starting RB **Eric Hickson** was granted an additional year of eligibility, and with 630 more yards, he will become the school's all-time leading rusher. Senior **Marlon Charles** also will be looking for some playing time, as will **David Allen**. Toss JUCO Player of the Year **Frank Murphy** into the mix, and there is a real logjam of quality players wanting the ball.

SEASONED FOR NEBRASKA

Bill Snyder has always gotten his team to play its best late in the season. Unfortunately the Wildcats have always played Nebraska early. This year the Huskers don't arrive until Nov. 14, and the meeting in Manhattan could have national championship implications.

1997 RECORD: 11-1 CONFERENCE FINISH: 7-1

S 6	@ Northern Illinois	W, 47-7
S 13	Ohio	W, 23-20
S 27	Bowling Green	W, 58-0
O 4	@ Nebraska	L, 56-26
O 11	Missouri	W, 41-11
O 18	Texas A&M	W, 36-17
O 25	@ Oklahoma	W, 26-7
N 1	@ Texas Tech	W, 13-2
N 8	Kansas	W, 48-16
N 15	Colorado	W, 37-20
N 22	@ Iowa St.	W, 28-3
D 31	vs. Syracuse	W, 35-18

& Tostitos Fiesta Bowl • Tempe, Ariz.

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	Darnell McDonald 6-3 195 Sr.	DE	Joe Bob Clements 6-3 245 Sr.
	Troy Hackney 6-1 200 Sr.		Chris Johnson 6-1 240 So.
LT	Damion McIntosh 6-4 290 Jr.	DT	Damion McIntosh 6-4 290 Jr.
	Ryan Cummings 6-5 275 Sr.		Nijjah McCoy 6-4 275 Jr.
LG	Brian Hanley 6-2 325 Sr.	DT	Andrae Rowe 6-0 290 Sr.
	Adam Hotz 6-2 275 So.		DeVane Robinson 6-1 270 Fr.
C	Randall Cummins 6-3 260 So.	DE	Darren Howard 6-4 240 Jr.
	Milford Stephenson 6-2 260 So.		Monty Beisel 6-3 235 So.
RG	Jeremy Martin 6-4 305 Sr.	LB	Travis Ochs 6-3 225 Sr.
	David McIntyre 6-2 305 Sr.		Travis Litton 6-2 240 Jr.
RT	Ryan Young 6-6 330 Sr.	LB	Jeff Kelly 6-0 240 Sr.
	Grant Reeves 6-6 275 So.		Ben Leber 6-3 235 Fr.
TE	Justin Swift 6-3 250 Sr.	LB	Mark Simoneau 6-0 230 Jr.
	Shad Meier 6-4 245 So.		Turella Williams 6-0 230 So.
RB	Eric Hickson 5-8 200 Sr.	CB	Gerald Neasman 5-9 190 Sr.
	Marlon Charles 5-9 190 Sr.		Jerametrius Butler 5-9 155 Fr.
QB	Michael Bishop 6-1 205 Sr.	FS	Lamar Chapman 6-1 175 Jr.
	Jonathan Beasley 6-1 220 Jr.		Cephus Scott 6-0 190 Jr.
FB	Brian Goolsby 6-2 250 Sr.	SS	Jarrod Cooper 6-1 205 So.
	Brandon Clark 6-2 215 Fr.		Milton Proctor 6-0 195 Fr.
WR	Gavin Paries 6-1 200 Sr.	CB	Dyshod Carter 5-10 175 So.
	DeAndrea Robinson 5-7 160 Sr.		Adrian Beard 5-8 180 So.
PK	Martin Gramatica 5-9 170 Sr.	P	James Garcia 6-2 195 Sr.

Players with starting experience in bold

COLORADO BUFFALOES

Before the start of spring practices, Colorado coach Rick Neuheisel instructed his players not to talk publicly about a season the Buffs would rather forget.

They adhered to his instructions, but they certainly haven't washed away the sour taste of last year's embarrassing 5-6 record, a season typified by the 27-24 final loss to Nebraska in which a late CU rally came up short.

In fact, the school's first losing season since 1984 and first non-bowl appearance since 1987 has rechanneled the focus of Neuheisel's fourth Buffalo team.

A wunderkind his first two years after succeeding Bill McCartney, the noose is tightening on Neuheisel. Buffalo faithful are questioning his coaching ability and his methods.

They'll find out soon enough if Neuheisel can coach on his own. With only a handful of McCartney recruits remaining, this clearly is Neuheisel's team.

Coming out of spring, he said only three positions were secure: weakside line-backer Hannibal Navies and offensive tackles Ryan Johanningmeier and Shane Cook, who more than held his own against Nebraska's Grant Wistrom last season.

"I sense they've bought into it. I think they're excited and they've got the right amount of optimism," Neuheisel said. "I think they know they've improved, and I think we can show them visually on tape how much harder they're working and playing. And I think we've shown them how much the competition is improving everybody."

Since competition is wide open at many key positions — most importantly at quarterback — it's difficult to gauge how the Buffs will react when they open against Colorado State at Denver's Mile High Stadium.

For Neuheisel, settling on a starter and getting improved play from the position appears to be the primary preseason goal.

"This is the first fall I'm going into without a pretty good idea who the quarterback is going to be," he said. "You'd like to make that determination maybe after the second week of camp so that you give your quarterback a good week and a half of knowing he's the guy. But I'm not going to put myself in a time situation."

Junior Jeremy Weisinger and sophomore Adam Bledsoe are the top two returning candidates.

Weisinger clearly had the better spring, throwing just

one interception in scrimmages. Bledsoe, a pure dropback passer, was wild with his passes all spring.

The wild card is junior college transfer Mike Moschetti, a 23-year-old former minor league baseball player. He led Mt. San Antonio College to the 1997 California JUCO title with a combination of athleticism and a decent arm.

The good news for whoever wins the job is that the offense won't be predicated so much on the pass.

Neuheisel believes that Colorado will have its best running game since Rashaan Salaam won the Heisman Trophy in 1994. He likes the stable of backs, led by Marlon Barnes and Dwayne Cherrington.

This year, the tailback will have a lead blocker

as CU made the H-back/fullback an integral part of the offense. Brody Heffner, the top returning tight end, was moved to H-back, where he

proved to be an effective blocker and solid receiver out of the backfield.

Placing less pressure on an inexperienced quarterback is another reason the Buffs are paying more attention to the running game. And, if Weisinger or Moschetti is the quarterback, that will create more headaches for defenses in the running game.

Not that Colorado won't be capable of mounting a good

Doug DeVoe



Marcus Stiggers is one of the fastest players in the Big 12, but will he be able to fill the shoes of first-team All-Big 12 receiver Phil Savoy?

passing attack or striking quickly. Neuheisel believes that he came out of the spring with seven proven wideouts, led by returning starters Darrin Chiaverini and Marcus Stiggers and sophomore Javon Green.

Another reason for increased emphasis on the running game: CU's offensive line had difficulty protecting the quarterback in the spring.

Most of the problems up front lie in the center of the line. Two-year starting center Adam Reed will be pressed by sophomore David Herrick in the fall. The top two guards are players who have never played a down for the Buffaloes: redshirt freshman Andre Gurode and '97 JUCO transfer Brad Bedell, who is coming off an injury hardship.

There are fewer question on defense, but it's not clear who will start.



Doug DeVoe

John Hessler's backup a year ago, Adam Bledsoe (above) was unable to secure the No. 1 quarterbacking job this spring due to poor throws and stiff competition.

The line suffered a blow in the spring when Marshall tore an ACL and MCL. He should be back in time for conference play. Jesse Warren factors in here as well, but at 265 pounds, will have to improve his upper-body strength to be strong against the run.

The end position should be the defense's strength. Junior Fred Jones, coming off ACL surgery and a university suspension, was one of the big surprises of the spring. He and sophomore Ian Loper led the way. Brady McDonnell and Nick Ziegler, who shared a position last year, and redshirt freshman Robert Haas give CU five quality players.

Navies heads what could be a strong linebacking corps. Southward had a big spring and will start at the strongside spot. Gregorak takes over for good in the middle after starting the final three games of last season.

The Buffs like their top three cornerbacks — Damen Wheeler, Marcus Washington and Ben Kelly — but aren't sure which two will start.

The safety positions weren't solidified in the spring, though junior Rashidi Barnes and sophomore John Sanders are the top candidates along with redshirt freshman Albus Brooks.

In the kicking game, Colorado, hoping for more consistency from punter Nick Pietsch, signed freshman Mark Mariscal to improve the competition there.

Jeremy Aldrich, who began his career by going 4-for-4 in field goals against Nebraska in 1996, returns after going 12-for-14 in '97. ■ — By Craig R. Harper

The Buffs proved soft against the run last year but should be better in 1998. Their tackles are bigger — Aaron Marshall, Sean Jarne and Justin Bannan are all 290 pounds — and Ty Gregorak goes 6-foot-5, 250 pounds at middle linebacker. Gregorak is flanked by Navies and Brandon Southward.

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Jeremy Aldrich, who began his career by going 4-for-4 in field goals against Nebraska in 1996, returns after going 12-for-14 in '97. ■ — By Craig R. Harper



AT A GLANCE

PROJECTED 1998 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

The skill positions, especially receivers and tailbacks, along with two good offensive tackles, a solid defensive line (especially at the ends), starting linebackers and first three at cornerback. Throw in a consistent kicker in **Jeremy Aldrich**.

WEAKNESSES

Rick Neuheisel has to be worried about the interior of the offensive line, general depth in the line and tight end, inexperience at quarterback and depth at linebacker and safety.

QUARTERBACK OPENING

Mike Moschetti, the 23-year-old JUCO transfer, might provide the leadership and calming influence if he can wrestle the job away from **Jeremy Weisinger**. The Buffs don't need great play here, but they do need a steady hand. **Adam Bledsoe**, who had a poor spring, also will be given an opportunity.

NEW BLOOD AT TB

First-year running backs coach **Kennedy Pola** was criticized by some for sticking with **Herchell Troutman** last year. Troutman showed flashes at times, but Pola can't contain his excitement this season with **Marlon Barnes**, **Dwayne Cherrington** and newcomer **Damion Barton**, all of whom bring a big-play capability Troutman lacked.

STEPPING UP ON D

Fred Jones and **Brandon Southward** brought wide smiles this spring to CU coaches who were looking for any player to step up. Jones, an end who was suspended for '97, might have had the best spring of any defender, with at least two sacks in each scrimmage.

3rd
NORTH DIVISION

1997 RECORD: 5-6 CONFERENCE FINISH: 3-5

S 8	Colorado St.	W, 31-21
S 13	@ Michigan	L, 27-3
S 27	Wyoming	W, 20-19
O 4	Texas A&M	L, 16-10
O 11	@ Oklahoma St.	L, 33-29
O 18	Kansas	W, 42-6
O 25	@ Texas	W, 47-30
N 1	Missouri	L, 41-31
N 8	@ Iowa St.	W, 43-38
N 15	@ Kansas St.	L, 37-20
N 22	Nebraska	L, 27-24

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	Javon Green	6-2 195 So.	DE	Ian Loper	6-4 240 So.
	Cedric Cormier	5-11 185 Fr.		and Fred Jones	6-3 250 Jr.
WR	Darrin Chiaverini	6-2 205 Sr.	DT	Sean Jarne	6-6 290 So.
	Eric McCready	6-4 200 So.		and Justin Bannan	6-3 290 Fr.
LT	Shane Cook	6-7 300 Jr.	DT	Jesse Warren	6-4 265 Jr.
	Enn Huizingh	6-8 270 Fr.		Chan Moody	6-5 295 Sr.
LG	Brad Bedell	6-5 295 Jr.	DE	Brady McDonnell	6-4 265 So.
	Kane Cullum	6-5 305 Jr.		Robert Haas	6-4 250 Fr.
C	Adam Reed	6-2 290 Sr.	WLB	Hannibal Navies	6-3 245 Sr.
	David Herrick	6-3 270 So.		Jonah Chun	6-0 210 Sr.
RG	Andre Gurode	6-4 300 Fr.	MLB	Ty Gregorak	6-3 250 So.
	Chris Morgan	6-3 300 Jr.		Wes Pratt	6-5 240 So.
RT	R. Johanningsmeier	6-7 285 Jr.	SLB	B. Southward	6-4 240 Sr.
	Kane Cullum	6-5 305 Jr.		Scott Nemeth	6-2 225 Fr.
WR	Marcus Stiggers	5-7 180 Jr.	LC	Damen Wheeler	5-10 175 Jr.
	Robert Toler	6-0 205 Jr.		M. Washington	6-3 210 Sr.
QB	Jeremy Weisinger	6-2 215 Jr.	SS	John Sanders	5-10 180 So.
	Adam Bledsoe	6-4 230 So.		Albus Brooks	6-0 200 Fr.
TB	Marlon Barnes	5-11 210 Sr.	FS	Rashidi Barnes	6-0 195 Jr.
	D. Cherrington	5-10 195 Jr.		Ryan Chiaverini	6-0 185 Jr.
HB	Brody Heffner	6-5 245 Jr.	RC	Ben Kelly	6-10 175 So.
	Daniel Graham	6-3 235 Fr.		M. Washington	6-3 210 Sr.
PK	Jeremy Aldrich	5-11 170 Jr.	P	Nick Pietsch	6-0 170 Jr.

Players with starting experience in bold

MISSOURI TIGERS

Asked to assess how much more progress quarterback Corby Jones can make after his breakthrough junior season, Missouri coach Larry Smith found it difficult to cobble together the proper evaluation.

"He can go ... the sky's ... I mean, I don't think there is any limit," Smith finally concluded. "No question that he's a key to our team and how good we can be, how much success we can have."

Jones has helped lead Missouri from the depths — 13 consecutive losing seasons — to a view of the top. Jones was the primary component in Mizzou's 7-4 regular season last year that produced a bowl bid for the first time since 1983.

Although Missouri lost to Colorado State in the Holiday Bowl, the 1997 season was an unfettered success. While securing that elusive winning record, Mizzou injected a major dose of respectability back into the program.

Now, the task is to avoid sliding back toward mediocrity. That might prove even more daunting than the long climb up.

"I think we can get better," said Smith, who resurrected programs at Tulane and Arizona before turning things around at MU. "Sure, you're going to try to pick up your intensity, try to pick up your work as a team. I don't think we slacked off one bit in the off-season program or in spring practice."

As Smith prepares his fifth team at Missouri, he assured that "our team is not satisfied with one season like last year. They're all intent on making it two, and then just going from there."

Jones, heading into his third full season as the starting quarterback, agreed. "We have to believe in what we're doing," he said, "and we have to believe that everyone on the team knows that we're not going to just go out there and win, just because we did last year. Everybody's got to

work their rear ends off to be a better football team."

That goal begins with Jones, who last season added a crisp passing touch to his already-established running ability. He set 12 school records while piling up 2,545 yards of total offense.

Jones scampered for 887 yards on 183 carries — a 4.8-yard average. But his biggest strides came when he put the ball in the air. Coming off a season in which he threw for only 624 yards, Jones hit on 102-of-191 passes for 1,658

yards and 12 touchdowns.

Asked what facets of his game he can improve, Jones said: "Everything, really. I don't think there's any one area that I can make a huge jump in, but I can make a couple of steps in the right direction in every aspect, really."

Whatever Jones and the Tigers face, they'll do so without some of their key weapons from 1997. Tailback Brock Olivo, Mizzou's career rushing leader, is gone, as are fullbacks Ernest Blackwell and Ron "Rhino" Janes. Receivers Torey Coleman, Jay Murchison and Ricky Ross also completed their eligibility.

Senior Devin West, who had shared the tailback duties with Olivo, finally will get "the opportunity to be the man," Smith said.

West will be spelled by sophomore Ricardo Rhodes. Also figuring into the tailback mix will be sophomore Kevin Tucker, along with incoming fresh-

man Zain Gilmore.

An area of concern for Smith is fullback, where experience is virtually nonexistent. Sophomore Rashidi Johnson is currently listed as the starter with junior college transfer Rob West and sophomore Nathan Proctor competing for the second-team spot.

Kent Layman returns as the most experienced wideout. A former running back, Layman piled up 534 yards on just

Doug DeVoe



Was it one good season and out for Missouri? It will be up to All-Big 12 quarterback Corby Jones to make sure a Tiger slide isn't in the future.

21 catches, producing an eye-popping average of 25.4 yards per reception.

Tight end is solid, with returnees Eddie Brooks and Jake Stueve. Brooks paced all Mizzou receivers with 24 catches last year. Stueve battled injuries and caught just two balls, but he is valued mainly for his blocking.

Junior Rob Riti anchors the offensive line. Seniors Craig Heimbarger and Todd Neimeyer should be a force on the right side, at guard and tackle, respectively. Replacing valuable guard Mike Morris and tackle Travis Biebel on the left side are junior Michael Valadez, who was switched from center to guard, and senior Chris Meredith at tackle.

Overall, Missouri has seven offensive starters back; the number of returning regulars on defense is the same.

The Tigers surrendered 30.5 points a game last year. But

the defenders earned a bend-but-don't-break reputation. They played their best at crucial times, when Mizzou desperately needed a stop to give its high-powered offense another crack.

In its 4-3 alignment, MU will have just one starter back up front — senior guard Justin Wyatt. Junior Jeff Marriott replaces Donnell Jones at nosetackle, and junior Steve Erickson moves in for Brian Cracraft at tackle. Senior Tim Mittelstadt moves into the vacated end spot.

Junior college transfer Marquis Gibson played so well at defensive end that he was voted the team's Defensive Player of the Year. But Smith wants to take advantage of Gibson's

The Tigers' leading tackler in 1997, Harold Piersey is expected to help improve a defense that allowed the second-most touchdown passes in the Big 12 last season.

speed by moving him to "bandit," or outside linebacker.

Junior Barry Odom is the most experienced of the inside linebackers, which is another area of uncertainty. Sophomore Pat Duffy played some last season, and redshirt freshman Duke Revard was a standout during spring practice.

The secondary could be Missouri's strongest area. Back are standout safeties Harold Piersey and Caldronoff Easter, who are both seniors. At cornerback, junior college transfer Wade Perkins had an excellent second half last year and should start on one side, with Carlos Posey manning the other corner spot.

The first thing Smith noted in his comments after the Holiday Bowl was the need to improve the kicking game. Whether that has been accomplished is questionable.

Complementary punters Vince Sebo and Jason Smith are back, but Sebo is inconsistent and Smith lacks distance. Record-setting kicker Scott Knickman is gone, and incoming freshman Alex St. Peter is the front-runner for the job.

When all is said and done, though, Missouri's hopes — once again — will fall squarely on Jones' broad shoulders. And that's just fine with him. ■ — *By Bill Coats*



Doug DeVoe



AT A GLANCE

PROJECTED 1998 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

The Tigers have one of the most talented and experienced secondaries in the Big 12, led by senior safeties **Harold Piersey** and **Caldronoff Easter**.

WEAKNESSES

The kicking game is a major concern. Barefooted punter **Vince Sebo** has a strong leg and has shown flashes of promise, but he's also been wildly inconsistent. The Tigers probably will have to depend on true freshman **Alex St. Peter** for their place-kicking chores.

CORBYMANIA

Corby Jones, the first-team All-Big 12 quarterback, is a nightmare for opposing defenses. He can chew up yardage on the ground and showed last season that he can be a dangerous passer, too. Another year like last and all that Heisman talk around Columbia may reach those with the votes.

LINE DANCING

Missouri gobbled up big yardage running behind two departed players on the left side of the offensive line. This season the Tigers will try to make their moves around the right side, where veterans **Craig Heimbarger** and **Todd Neimeyer** return. The play of Missouri's offensive front will be a major factor in the Tigers' success.

IN A RUSH

Tailback **Devin West** is the lone returning ballcarrier with significant experience. For MU's ground game to prosper again (it ranked sixth nationally last year), help will have to come from sophomores **Ricardo Rhodes** and **Kevin Tucker**, as well as freshman **Zain Gilmore**. Of course, it doesn't hurt that the Tigers have Jones to run the ball as well.

4th
NORTH
DIVISION

1997 RECORD: 7-5 CONFERENCE FINISH: 5-3

S 6	Eastern Michigan	W, 44-24
S 13	@ Kansas	L, 15-7
S 20	@ Tulsa	W, 42-21
S 27	Ohio St.	L, 31-10
O 4	Iowa St.	W, 45-21
O 11	@ Kansas St.	L, 41-11
O 18	Texas	W, 37-29
O 25	@ Oklahoma St.	W, 51-50 (2ot)
N 1	@ Colorado	W, 41-31
N 8	Nebraska	L, 45-38 (ot)
N 15	Baylor	W, 42-24
D 29	vs. Colorado St. &	L, 35-24

& Plymouth Holiday Bowl • San Diego, Calif.

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	Kareem Wise	6-3	216	Jr.	OLB	Marquis Gibson	6-2	225	Sr.
	John Dausman	6-1	184	So.		Daryl Whittington	6-6	227	So.
LT	Chris Meredith	6-5	296	Sr.	G	Justin Wyatt	6-4	275	Sr.
	Jeff Hellerstedt	6-4	300	Fr.		Pat Mingucci	6-2	266	Jr.
LG	Michael Valadez	6-2	288	Jr.	N	Jeff Marriott	6-5	288	Jr.
	Cliff Smith	6-5	284	Sr.		David Webber	6-2	314	So.
C	Rob Riti	6-3	283	Jr.	T	Steve Erickson	6-4	280	Jr.
	Mike Hayes	6-3	289	Fr.		Michael Gavins	6-6	300	Fr.
RG	Craig Heimbarger	6-3	313	Sr.	E	Tim Mittelstadt	6-8	263	Sr.
	Adrian Cole	6-4	306	Fr.		Danny McCamy	6-3	242	So.
RT	Todd Neimeyer	6-5	310	Sr.	SAM	Pat Duffy	6-1	236	So.
	Aaron Crittendon	6-5	289	Fr.		Duke Revard	6-3	232	Fr.
TE	Jake Stueve	6-3	239	Sr.	WILL	Barry Odom	6-0	219	Jr.
	Eddie Brooks	6-1	233	Sr.		Paul Schmanke	6-0	207	So.
QB	Corby Jones	6-1	222	Sr.	SS	Caldronoff Easter	5-10	188	Sr.
	Ryan Douglass	6-2	201	So.		Harold Hendricks	6-3	207	So.
TB	Devin West	6-2	222	Sr.	HB	Carlos Posey	6-0	202	Jr.
	Ricardo Rhodes	5-6	174	So.		Andre Roberson	5-10	172	So.
FB	Rashidi Johnson	6-0	236	So.	FS	Harold Piersey	6-2	179	Sr.
	Rob West	6-0	236	Sr.		Julian Jones	5-11	189	So.
WR	Kent Layman	5-11	187	Jr.	CB	Wade Perkins	6-1	189	Sr.
	Chris Puyear	6-1	179	Jr.		Randy Potter	5-10	182	Sr.
PK	Alex St. Peter	6-2	180	Fr.	P	Vince Sebo	6-1	228	Jr.

Players with starting experience in bold

KANSAS JAYHAWKS

Until last season, Terry Allen never had failed to win at least eight games a year as a head football coach.

Until last season, Allen never had had his team ranked outside the top 20 in the final poll of the year.

Until last season, the first year of his head coaching career was the only season in which an Allen-coached team had failed to reach the postseason.

Allen never had had a season end in mid-November — until last year.

"It was miserable," Allen said of his long winter. "I never want to be in that position again."

Allen brought an impressive NCAA Division I-AA resume to Kansas. It included a 75-26 record over eight seasons, seven straight conference championships and two national semifinal appearances — all with his alma mater, Northern Iowa.

Allen came to KU with a reputation for offensive wizardry. He promised to replace KU's lead-run offense with an exciting pro-style passing attack.

But the Jayhawks lost eight offensive starters to graduation or defection, and their only returning wide receiver, John Gordon, was diagnosed in the preseason with heart disease.

Perhaps it should come as no surprise, then, that the Jayhawks finished last in the nation in total yards per game, a mere 241.5 yards, en route to a 5-6 record.

"Obviously, it was a very frustrating season offensively," Allen said. "We weren't exposed to the point that we were an 0-11 football team. But when you're last in the country in offense, you don't expect to win five games. Sure, we could have gained a few more yards — and lost a few more football games. I'd rather have the wins."

"I don't expect to be in the same boat this year. We might be. But I do not expect at the end of the season next year to be talking about being the worst team in the coun-

try again."

If continuity counts for anything, he won't be talking about it. KU returns 10 offensive starters.

Every offensive lineman returns bigger and better than last year, and the unit received a boost in NJCAA All-America transfer John Oddonetto.

Zac Wegner, who won the starting quarterback job midway through last season, returns after his first season of collegiate experience.

Though Eric Vann departed, the Jayhawks return their best running backs in David Winbush, Mitch Bowles and Julius Bruce.

Thirteen of the 15 Jayhawks who caught passes in 1997 return. Gordon is expected to be back by fall, and he'll be joined by redshirt freshman Harrison Hill, who in his first career start suffered a season-ending broken ankle in the second week of the season.

"If we get everybody back healthy," Allen said, "then we can turn a liability into an ability."

New this year is a West Coast, controlled passing attack, which puts more of an emphasis on Wegner's decision-making, something Allen thinks his quarterback can handle.

"Zac has really improved," Allen said.

"We never really got a chance to show that, but he's much improved. And the thing I like is his leadership. His confidence and maturity have

improved tenfold."

The offense showed signs of life late in the season, scoring an average of 27 points a game over the final three games after averaging 12 points a game for the first eight.

"We got better as the season went along," Allen said. "It's imperative that we continue where we left off, and I'm confident we will. Everybody's bigger. Everybody's better. Everybody's more mature. And everybody has a better

KU Sports Information



Considered an offensive wizard, Kansas coach Terry Allen hopes he can work his magic this year with Zac Wegner at quarterback.

understanding of what we're trying to do."

The defense is another matter. Gone are sack leader Ron Warner and leading tackling Tony Blevins — along with five other defensive starters.

"It should be an interesting rebuilding," defensive coordinator Ardell Wiegandt said. "But we think we have the potential to be better than last year. Hey, last year we only had about a third of our defenses in. Next year we should have about 80 percent in."

The Jayhawks are loaded at linebacker — if they can get everybody healthy. Steve Bratten, J.J. Johnson and Dariss Lomax all sat out spring drills with nagging injuries, leaving redshirt freshmen Andrew LeClair and Marcus Rogers as the starters during the spring on the inside. Outside, senior Hanson Caston will start with Patrick Brown, who tied for the team lead with three interceptions last fall.

Returning, too, are lineman Dion Johnson and cornerback Jamie Harris.

Up front, Johnson is the only returning starter. Adrian Greene, who took off last season for academic reasons, returns. KU also will field a new nosetackle in John Williams, a backup to Brett McGraw last year. KU also expects help from Dion Rayford, a 6-3, 250-pounder from West Valley (Calif.) Community College. Rayford led the California junior colleges with 22 sacks his sophomore year and is expected to play his way into the starting lineup.

And then there's the secondary. Harris returns at one corner, and the KU coaches think co-captain

With an untested and undermanned secondary, the Jayhawks are relying on their front six and linebacker Patrick Brown to pick up the slack defensively.

Michael Allen is ready to start at strong safety. Chad Coellner, a special teams regular last fall, is penciled in at free safety. The other corner spot will go to junior college transfer Muhammad Abdul-Rahim or junior Jahmal Wright.

After a first run through the Big 12, the Jayhawks soon learned that the rushing game still dominates. To compensate, Allen expects his new secondary to scrap last year's zone coverages for more man-to-man.

"We learned last year that we needed to get an extra guy in the box, if you will, to stop the run," Allen said. "That hurt us last year. It's not that we didn't want to do more man last year. We just didn't want to switch in midstream. Do we have the personnel to do that this year? We think we do."

KU should be solid in its special teams. Place-kicker Joe Garcia returns for his sophomore year after hitting 11-of-14 field goals as a freshman. Punting is a concern with the graduation of Dean Royal. Punting duties will fall to JUCO transfer Joey Pelfanio, the nation's seventh-best junior college punter last season at Sacramento (Calif.) CC, or redshirt freshman Matt Tyler. ■ — *By Andrew Hartsock*



KU Sports Information



AT A GLANCE

PROJECTED 1998 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

Sure, KU ranked dead last in the nation in total offense last season, but the Jayhawks return 10 of 11 offensive starters, with greater depth across the board. After all, there's nowhere to go but up.

WEAKNESSES

Three of four starters and five of the top six defensive backs are gone, leaving corner **Jamie Harris** as the only DB with starting experience. Though the safety positions were solidified in the spring, the other corner spot is still unsettled.

ZAC ATTACK

Hampered by an inexperienced, undernourished line and saddled with too few quality receivers, **Zac Wegner** completed just 45.8 percent of his passes in 1997. With KU's shift to a West Coast offense, Wegner and his ability to make quick decisions become even more important.

GOOD HANDS PEOPLE

At times last year, KU was down to four healthy receivers. This year, the receiving corps is much stronger, and two ballyhooed wideouts — **Harrison Hill** and **John Gordon**, who sat out last season after making a splash as a freshman — return. How successful they are will depend on Wegner, who should be much improved in his second year as a starter.

RON WHO?

Ron Warner blossomed into a wicked pass rusher, setting the KU career and single-season sack records as a senior last season. His heir apparent is **Hanson Caston**, another JUCO transfer with speed off the corner and a penchant for getting to the QB. If Caston is as good as many think, the KU defense won't miss a beat.

5th
**NORTH
DIVISION**

1997 RECORD: 5-6 CONFERENCE FINISH: 3-5

A 28	Ala.-Birmingham	W, 24-0
S 6	TCU	W, 17-10
S 13	Missouri	W, 15-7
S 20	@ Cincinnati	L, 34-7
O 4	Oklahoma	W, 20-17
O 11	@ Texas Tech	L, 17-7
O 18	@ Colorado	L, 42-6
O 25	Nebraska	L, 35-0
N 1	Iowa St.	W, 34-24
N 8	@ Kansas St.	L, 48-16
N 15	@ Texas	L, 45-31

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

SE	Michael Chandler 5-11 195 Jr.	OLB	Patrick Brown 5-11 210 Sr.
	Eric Patterson 6-1 200 So.		Tim Bowers 6-0 220 So.
LT	Dan Dercher 6-6 285 Sr.	DE	Dion Johnson 6-4 290 Jr.
	Justin Hartwig 6-5 270 Fr.		Ben Coleman 6-5 300 Fr.
LG	Shawn Vang 6-2 285 Sr.	NT	John Williams 6-2 300 Jr.
	John Oddonitto 6-5 280 Jr.		Nate Dwyer 6-3 305 Fr.
C	Chris Enneking 6-3 280 Jr.	DE	Jeremy Hanak 6-6 250 Jr.
	Bob Schmidt 6-1 280 So.		Jeff Redhage 6-6 265 Jr.
RG	Justin Glasgow 6-6 320 Sr.	OLB	Hanson Caston 6-2 235 Sr.
	Chuck Jarvis 6-6 305 So.		Victor Bullock 6-2 230 So.
RT	Michael Lies 6-2 300 Sr.	ILB	Steve Bratten 6-1 235 Sr.
	Jerome Parks 6-2 270 Sr.		Marcus Rogers 6-1 235 Fr.
TE	Brian Gray 6-3 235 Sr.	ILB	Andrew LeClair 6-6 235 Fr.
	Sean McDermott 6-3 240 Sr.		J.J. Johnson 6-2 235 Sr.
QB	Zac Wegner 6-2 230 Jr.	LC	Jamie Harris 5-10 185 Sr.
	Akili Robertson 5-11 190 Sr.		Quincy Roe 6-9 180 Fr.
FL	Termaine Fulton 5-10 188 So.	RC	M. Abdul-Rahim 6-0 180 Jr.
	Tanner Hancock 5-10 170 So.		Jahmal Wright 5-9 185 Jr.
HB	Mitch Bowles 5-8 185 Jr.	SS	Michael Allen 5-10 195 Sr.
	Julius Bruce 5-9 195 Sr.		Ocasio Cofield 6-3 220 Fr.
FB	Greg Davis 5-11 230 So.	FS	Chad Coellner 6-0 205 Jr.
	Tyrus Fontenot 5-8 230 Jr.		Bilal Cook 5-10 180 So.
PK	Joe Garcia 6-0 175 So.	P	Matt Tyler 6-3 215 Fr.

Players with starting experience in bold

IOWA STATE CYCLONES

Dan McCarney is hoping for a reversal of fortune. Since taking over for Jim Walden in 1995, McCarney has won three, two and one game in his three campaigns as the Cyclones' mentor. If he doesn't put an end to this inverse recipe for success in his fourth season, he may not survive to see his fifth.

Like Walden before him, McCarney is a genuinely likable person who for whatever reason can't seem to get a winning football program going at Iowa State. Last season was his worst yet in Ames:

- The defense avoided allowing 500 points by one touchdown.
- Iowa State generated only 19.5 points per game and allowed 44.8.
- ISU's biggest weapon, running back Darren Davis, missed nearly one-third of the season with a stress fracture in his leg.

With his back firmly pressed against the wall, McCarney came out aggressively in the off-season and hauled in what many experts labeled the best junior college recruiting class in the nation. Desperate for Kansas State-type success, the Cyclone staff brought in 17 JUCO players, many of them defensive stoppers, to try putting an immediate halt to the bleeding.

"I really like the way our defense has improved this spring," said McCarney. "To have a chance for success and to have a chance for winning this fall, we've got to play good defense."

Defensive coordinator John Skladany spent the spring working with a more agile, mercurial unit. Among the faces popping up in starting positions as spring wound down were redshirt freshman defensive end Kevin DeRonde, a 6-foot-5, 240-pound speed rusher who has bumped senior Chin Achebe at defensive end, and linebacker Jesse Beckom, a 6-0, 210-pound walkon who's wowed the staff since his arrival last season.

"Defensively, we're running to the ball better than we

have since I've been here," McCarney said. "We have a little more speed than we've had in the past."

Most of the secondary is unsettled. Three junior college stars — Javon Daniels, Jamarcus Powers and Jason Parrott — are all expected to challenge for playing time this fall. Their arrival could significantly alter a starting lineup that currently includes Dustin Avey at strong safety, Adam Runk at free safety and Dawan Anderson and Breon Ansley at the corners.

No matter who fills out the 11 jerseys on defense, the Cyclones will need a minor miracle to face up to yet another imposing schedule. ISU finished last in the Big 12 in pass efficiency defense, total defense and scoring defense.

Now for the good news. Iowa State hasn't lacked for offensive highlights the last three seasons with the Davis brothers (Darren and former Heisman candidate Troy) in the backfield, and the story remains the same in 1998 with Darren back for his junior season.

Despite missing nearly four full games to injury, Davis scampered for 1,005 yards last season, becoming just the ninth Cyclone to eclipse the 1,000-yard mark in a season. Heading into fall, Davis is fully healed and appears ready to bust out



Todd Bandhauer led the Big 12 in passing yards in '97, but he must get help from an offensive line that allowed him to be sacked 46 times.

in '98.

"Darren didn't miss a beat or a practice," said McCarney. "He broke a lot of tackles and made a lot of big plays.

His grade point average is in good shape, too — he's getting better grades than I did in college, and I made it through.

"He comes to practice the way you want all your kids to. He has an infectious attitude and has fun at practice. Some kids find it hard to do that."

The only thing that could hold Davis and his fellow backs down this fall is a revamped offensive line, which

lost tackle Oliver Ross to the Dallas Cowboys in the draft and was missing three starters due to off-season surgery this spring.

Solid line play also will be a concern for record-setting quarterback Todd Bandhauer. A senior, Bandhauer threw for more than 2,500 yards and an ISU-record 20 touchdowns last season. But he also was sacked 46 times.

"Bandhauer was sharp all spring. He made good decisions all spring, and he's definitely improved over the fall," McCarney said.

Bandhauer will be without his top five wide receivers from 1997, including four-year starter Ed Williams. Four JUCO imports may help fill that void, but for now it's junior Mike Brantley and former defensive back Kevin Wilson on the depth chart.



John W. Montell

The Cyclones are hoping that Darren Davis can have the same kind of breakout year as a junior that his brother, Troy, had as a junior at Iowa State in 1996.

It's possible that the Cyclones have the best tight end situation in the Big 12. Senior Damian Gibson, a 6-4, 262-pounder, is a bulldozer with soft hands who can rumble after the catch, and 6-8, 283-pound sophomore Andy Stensrud is coming off a brilliant first season. His hands and size drew comparisons to Kellen Winslow last year, but he missed most the spring with an ankle injury.

On to special teams, where Iowa State was disastrous last season. The Cyclones allowed two kicks to be run back for touchdowns in a loss to Minnesota, and a third was called back on a penalty; Texas A&M took one back for a score, as did Nebraska. Add a pair of blocked punts for touchdowns in a loss to Kansas, and it becomes clear as to why ISU won just one game in 1997.

Senior Jamie Kohl will handle the place-kicking chores again in the fall after connecting on 9-of-13 field goals. Carl Gomez, a sophomore, is back at punter after a stellar season when he averaged 41.6 yards on 66 kicks.

McCarney would like to see his team become closer between now and the kickoff against TCU.

"You can talk about togetherness to a point, but it has to come from within, from practice, from games and from success," McCarney said. "This is going to be a team that will be very close, focused and ready to turn the corner."

He'd like to see the JUCO transfers walk onto campus and turn the two-deeps, as well as ISU's football fortunes, on its head. For now, he's like a gambler who's only seen the first two cards of a stud poker hand. He's hopeful, but he won't know what he's got until it's laid out in front of him.

"There should be better competition come fall, but all those juniors have to qualify academically, prepare themselves physically, and learn the system. They'll be way behind," he said. ■ — *By Todd Stevens*



AT A GLANCE

PROJECTED 1998 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

Darren Davis and **Todd Bandhauer**. Davis rushed for more than 1,000 yards while playing in fewer than eight total games. Bandhauer threw for a school-record 20 touchdowns last season while piling up more than 2,500 yards through the air.

WEAKNESSES

The defense allowed opponents to practically score at will last year and the special teams were anything but special. A junior college recruiting class labeled by some as the nation's best may redecorate the Cyclones' defense by the start of the season.

TOGETHERNESS

This was a buzzword all through spring practice. Both coaches and players admitted that the club split into factions during the 1-10 season of 1997, and if things are going to get any better in 1998, it's going to take a team of united Cyclones to make it happen.

ROAD WEARY

Believe it or not, Iowa State has not won a football game outside of Ames since November of 1991. This seven-year itch is dying to be scratched, but with road contests this fall at Iowa, Colorado, Oklahoma, Kansas State and Texas, don't bank on it.

CALLING JENNY CRAIG

The ISU defense has got to get leaner, and right now. Last year's unit allowed nearly 45 points a game and 68 touchdowns. By comparison, Kansas State's defense allowed 19. Defensive coordinator **John Skladany** must shave at least two touchdowns a game from last year's scoring average. If he can't, it's going to be another long season for the Cyclones.

6th
NORTH
DIVISION

1997 RECORD: 1-10 CONFERENCE FINISH: 1-7

A 30	Oklahoma St.	L, 21-14
S 6	@ Wyoming	L, 56-10
S 13	@ Minnesota	L, 53-29
S 20	Iowa	L, 63-20
O 4	@ Missouri	L, 45-21
O 18	@ Texas A&M	L, 56-17
O 25	Baylor	W, 24-17
N 1	@ Kansas	L, 34-24
N 8	Colorado	L, 43-38
N 15	@ Nebraska	L, 77-14
N 22	Kansas St.	L, 28-3

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

SE	Michael Brantley	6-0	196	Jr.	RE	Reggie Hayward	6-5	240	So.
	Chris Anthony	6-3	196	So.		Andre Lee	6-0	270	Sr.
LT	Bill Marsau	6-5	296	Jr.	DT	James Reed	6-1	265	So.
	Cory Hanner	6-4	300	Fr.		Michael Jackson	6-1	266	Fr.
LG	Eugene Bernal	6-3	293	Sr.	NG	Nigel Tharpe	6-4	275	So.
	Adam Sansale	6-3	300	Fr.		Ryan Harklau	6-4	255	So.
C	Ben Beaudet	6-4	306	So.	END	Kevin DeRonde	6-5	240	Fr.
	T.J. Tuetken	6-4	275	Jr.		Chin Achebe	6-1	247	Sr.
RG	Josh Rank	6-4	276	So.	OLB	Jim Morse	6-2	228	So.
	Brian Donahue	6-5	277	Fr.		Kip King	6-0	230	Sr.
RT	Marcel Howard	6-6	324	Fr.	MILB	Dave Brcka	6-2	243	Jr.
	G. Cunningham	6-5	272	Fr.		Lynn Hadnot	6-0	237	Jr.
FL	Kevin Wilson	5-10	187	Sr.	ILB	Jesse Beckom	6-0	210	Jr.
	Chris Conrad	6-1	207	Fr.		Andy Moser	6-0	222	Fr.
QB	Todd Bandhauer	6-3	232	Sr.	FS	Adam Runk	6-2	191	Fr.
	Sage Rosenfels	6-4	217	So.		Kemp Knighten	5-11	210	Sr.
TB	Darren Davis	5-8	190	Jr.	CB	Dawan Anderson	5-8	168	Sr.
	J.J. Moses	5-8	170	So.		Ryan Sloth	5-8	178	So.
FB	Jerome Heavens	5-10	219	So.	SS	Dustin Avey	6-3	200	So.
	Hez Jackson	6-0	238	Jr.		Doug Densmore	5-10	196	So.
TE	Damian Gibson	6-4	262	Sr.	CB	Breon Ansley	5-8	172	So.
	Andy Stensrud	6-8	283	So.		Jeff Waters	6-2	185	Jr.
PK	Jamie Kohl	6-0	208	Sr.	P	Carl Gomez	6-2	202	So.

Players with starting experience in bold

TEXAS A&M AGGIES

R.C. SLOCUM is more concerned with his lines than the line.

"We recognize that when we play Florida State there is a chance we'll lose the game," Texas A&M's head coach said. "No one should go into shock if we get beat by Florida State. But to me, it's something that gives us a chance to have something to focus on this summer."

So goes Texas Aggie football '98, when all of A&M's rowdy fans will be coming over that Monday night, Aug. 31, when A&M and FSU clash in the Kickoff Classic.

A year ago people poked fun at the Aggies' schedule, which included Sam Houston State to kick off the season. After the Kickoff Classic, however, the Aggies will have played Nebraska, UCLA and FSU in consecutive games. Last year's team finished 9-4 and a surprising 6-2 in the Big 12, but there were still questions about the strength of their schedule.

"People who liked to talk about our schedule," quarterback Brannndon Stewart said, "weren't involved in playing our schedule."

When A&M was given the opportunity to face the Seminoles, Aggie athletic director Wally Groff reminded Slocum of A&M's final two games of the 1997 season, losses to the Cornhuskers and Bruins.

"He said, 'Hey, I like the challenge. You can't win the big ones unless you play them,'" Groff said.

If there were a season for the Aggies to play a preseason bowl, now's the time, because most of their key players return.

While all of their skill players are back on offense, A&M must replace three starters on the line.

"I would say offensively the only part where we're not a veteran team and don't have a tremendous amount of depth is on the offensive line. But we've got some good young players who we think can fill those roles," new A&M offensive coordinator Steve Kragthorpe said.

Senior Cameron Spikes moves from right tackle to left guard, while junior Andy Vincent will fill in at right tackle. Senior Rex Tucker should get the nod at left tackle, while junior Semisi Heimuli returns at right guard.

That leaves the snapper, and it's neck-and-neck between freshman Seth McKinney and sophomore Toby McCarthy.

A&M should be set at the skill positions on offense. The Aggies return a load of experience at quarterback in Stewart and Randy McCown, and their backfield may be one of the country's best.

"Our biggest problem at running back is trying to get all of them on the field," Kragthorpe said. "We've got what we feel are four excellent tailbacks, and they each have their own little niche and do things that complement each other. The nice thing about them is they all have great attitudes and they're very unselfish."

Slocum uses the example of the Aggies having Greg Hill, Rodney Thomas and Leeland McElroy in the same backfield, and all are in the NFL. Each member of A&M's current trio of Sirr Parker, D'Andre "Tiki" Hardeman and Dante Hall has at least 1,400 yards rushing at A&M.

"Having all of them helps me in the passing game because we can throw the ball to the

backs," Stewart said. "And when the (backs) get past the linebackers and safeties, we can get one-on-one coverage outside, which makes it easier to

complete passes."

A&M returns all of its receivers, though senior Aaron Oliver tore his anterior cruciate ligament and is questionable for the start of the season.

Junior Chris Cole will play even more if Oliver can't return right away, and flanker Leroy Hodge's 14.6 yards per catch last year was a team high.

At tight end, seniors Derrick Spiller and Dan Campbell

Glen Johnson



After registering a Big 12-best 130 tackles a year ago, Dat Nguyen needs less than 90 stops in 1998 to become A&M's all-time leading tackler.

will continue to split playing time.

Stewart and McCown split time at quarterback last year before Stewart finally got the nod following the loss at Texas Tech.

"Brandon has great command of what we're doing offensively and I think his confidence level is high," Kragthorpe said of the projected starter.

The confidence level is also high on defense, where Mike Hankwitz enters his second year as defensive coordinator. The Wrecking Crew returns six starters, including first-team All-Big 12 linebacker Dat Nguyen.

"The expectations are going to be a little higher because of the success we've had," Nguyen said. "We're going to play five or six teams in the top 20, and that will be neat. The expectations are high, but we're going to accept the challenge."

If this team is to defend its Big 12 South title, the defensive line will have to ripen in a hurry.

Slocum's recruiting class of a year ago included seven defensive linemen, and he'll have that bunch from which to choose three new starters.

The spring depth chart lists sophomores Rocky Bernard and Ronald Flemons as the starting ends, and three possibilities at nose tackle: sophomores Ron Edwards and Stephen Young and red-shirt freshman Tango McCauley.

The linebacking corps is the strength of the defense. Senior outside backer Warrick Holdman returns as a fourth-year starter, and sophomore Roylin Bradley should hold down the other spot.

On the inside, sophomore Cornelius Anthony and junior Sean Coryatt will battle to start alongside Nguyen.

In the defensive backfield, A&M returns essentially the same bunch it's had for three years. Safeties Brandon Jennings and Rich Coady return as starters, as do corners Jason Webster and Sedrick Curry.

"They're more comfortable with coverages and things," Hankwitz said. "With the experience, I think we'll be better there."

The Aggies get their chance a week earlier than most teams in a game at The Meadowslands, N.J., that Slocum said A&M couldn't pass up.

"I didn't want to be sitting on my back porch after retirement and think that I had a chance to play on national TV against a great team and turned it down because there was a chance we'd get beat," Slocum said. "We're in this profession to teach young men to be bold and not afraid to take risks."

"What kind of a lesson would that have taught?"

The Aggies will find out in that first edition of Monday Night Football. ■ — By Brent Zwerneman



Bob Beavers

The Aggies are counting on a big year from Dante Hall, who last season came within 32 yards of becoming A&M's first 1,000-yard rusher since Leeland McElroy in 1995.



AT A GLANCE

PROJECTED 1998 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

The running backs and linebackers are among the best in the nation. **Sirr Parker** clocked a 4.24 in the 40-yard dash during spring drills. **Dante Hall** keeps getting stronger and **Eric Bernard** returns from an injury. Throw in **Tiki Hardeman** and **Burnest Rhodes** and this is a scary group. Senior linebacker **Dat Nguyen** leads his band that also includes four-year starter **Warrick Holdman**.

WEAKNESSES

The offensive and defensive lines are young and inexperienced. Aggie coaches would like to think ample size and exuberance might make up for a lack of playing time, but **R.C. Slocum** will be the first to tell you there's no teacher like being on the field.

CLEAR-CUT QB

Brandon Stewart must steadily get better, as he did last year. He should benefit from being the clear-cut starter heading into the season. Last year, R.C. Slocum let Stewart and **Randy McCown** battle it out on the field, to sometimes disjointed results.

GET OFFENSIVE

Steve Kragthorpe is in charge of an offense accused in the past of being too one-dimensional. He will try to strike a balance between running and throwing. With all of their skills players back, this could be A&M's best offense in years — if those young guys block for them.

SECONDARY TO NONE

Will a mostly veteran — but largely unspectacular — secondary hold its own? Defensive coordinator **Mike Hankwitz** said the defensive backs had a season of adjustment last year as they learned more coverages.

1st
SOUTH
DIVISION

1997 RECORD: 9-4 CONFERENCE FINISH: 6-2

S 6	Sam Houston St.	W, 59-6
S 20	SW Louisiana	W, 66-0
S 27	North Texas#	W, 36-10
O 4	@ Colorado	W, 16-10
O 11	Iowa St.	W, 56-17
O 18	@ Kansas St.	L, 36-17
O 25	@ Texas Tech	L, 16-13
N 1	Oklahoma St.	W, 28-25 (ot)
N 8	Baylor	W, 38-10
N 15	@ Oklahoma	W, 51-7
N 22	Texas	W, 27-16
D 6	vs. Nebraska%	L, 54-15
J 1	vs. UCLA	L, 29-23

Texas Stadium • Irving, Texas
% Big 12 Championship Game • San Antonio, Texas
! Cotton Bowl • Dallas, Texas

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

SE	Aaron Oliver	6-0 198 Sr.	LE	Rocky Bernard	6-3 269 So.
	Chris Cole	6-0 186 Jr.		Lonnie Madison	6-3 250 Fr.
RT	Andy Vincent	6-3 301 Jr.	NT	Ron Edwards	6-3 262 So.
	Shea Holder	6-5 304 Jr.	-or-	Stephen Young	6-0 268 So.
RG	Semisi Heimuli	6-2 303 Jr.	RE	Ronald Flemons	6-5 247 So.
	Brandon Houston	6-5 293 Sr.		Mike Kazmierski	6-4 262 Jr.
C	Seth McKinney	6-3 293 Fr.	OLB	Roylin Bradley	6-1 221 So.
-or-	Toby McCarthy	6-2 283 So.	-or-	Chris Thierry	6-2 221 Jr.
LG	Cameron Spikes	6-3 310 Sr.	ILB	Cornelius Anthony	6-0 224 So.
	Chris Valletta	6-2 306 So.	-or-	Sean Coryatt	6-0 215 Jr.
LT	Rex Tucker	6-5 290 Sr.	ILB	Dat Nguyen	5-11 221 Sr.
	Moses Vakalahi	6-5 307 Fr.		Amon Simon	6-1 229 Fr.
TE	Derrick Spiller	6-3 257 Sr.	OLB	Warrick Holdman	6-1 230 Sr.
-or-	Dan Campbell	6-5 262 Sr.		Jason Glenn	6-0 220 So.
QB	Brandon Stewart	6-2 221 Sr.	CB	Jason Webster	5-10 178 Jr.
	Randy McCown	6-1 210 Jr.		Jay Brooks	5-9 180 Fr.
FL	Leroy Hodge	6-2 204 Jr.	CB	Sedrick Curry	6-2 192 Jr.
	Chris Taylor	5-10 176 So.	-or-	Shun Horn	5-9 190 Sr.
FB	Marc Broyles	5-11 247 Sr.	FS	Brandon Jennings	6-1 191 Jr.
	D'Andre Hardeman	5-11 232 Sr.		Taya Jones	6-2 204 Sr.
RB	Dante Hall	5-8 190 Jr.	SS	Rich Coady	6-1 210 Sr.
-or-	Sirr Parker	5-11 188 Sr.		Michael Jameson	5-10 179 So.
PK	Russell Bynum	5-9 176 So.	P	Shane Lechler	6-2 220 Jr.

Players with starting experience in bold

OKLAHOMA STATE COWBOYS

A harbinger of Oklahoma State's 1998 season may have come in April.

Regrettably for Cowboy rooters, it had nothing to do with spring drills and everything to do with the NFL draft.

Three former Cowboys were taken in the first four rounds, with All-Big 12 corners R.W. McQuarters and Kevin Williams going in the first and third, respectively, and All-America tight end Alonzo Mayes in the fourth.

Further depleting the roster was the loss of All-Big 12 defensive lineman Jamal Williams.

"We lost four professional players who really played a big part in our success," said OSU coach Bob Simmons, whose team finished 8-4 and earned a berth in the Alamo Bowl. "But can we repeat the season? I like to think that we can. We have to answer some things. It's a challenge for these kids to step up."

Dents aside, it would be foolish to write off Simmons and the Cowboys, for they have shown astounding healing power.

Simmons made national news in March, receiving a transplanted kidney from his wife, Linda. Within a week, Simmons was back in his office and 11 days later he was on the practice field.

This came only months after he had transformed OSU into a Big 12 contender.

Blindsided in August by the suspensions of 11 players, including five projected starters, OSU regrouped to post its first winning season since 1988. Highlighting the breakthrough year were the school's best start since 1945 and an Associated Press ranking that jumped as high as No. 12.

Quarterback Tony Lindsay proved to be an instant success, running and passing his way to Big 12 Freshman of the Year honors. So good was Lindsay at his role that Simmons has said he would like to expand it this season.

To that end, the coach sent members of his staff on a fact-finding mission, dispatching them to places such as Oregon State and California to observe passing schemes.

"Not that I didn't like our passing game, but I thought we were a little limited in scope," Simmons said. "As I looked around the country at what other schools were doing, it added a little more to what I wanted to do."

Lindsay topped the Big 12 in passing efficiency, connecting on 61.8 percent of his passes. He also ran for more

yards (564) than any OSU quarterback since 1973.

Backing him up are junior Chris Chaloupka and redshirt freshman B.J. Tiger. Assuming he doesn't sign a professional baseball contract, 6-foot-5 freshman Matt Holliday, a *Parade* All-American, will join OSU in the fall.

"If something happens to Tony, we're in good hands," Simmons said. "Chris is solid, always has been. B.J. is still learning. Matt is a big pro-quarterback type. What he gives you is he can see over everything. He has a great arm and great touch. But he's still a freshman."

The health of Lindsay and Chaloupka was a concern this spring. A week before spring drills ended, Chaloupka broke the same bone in his left wrist that he broke in

1997. Diagnosed with a congenital heart ailment, Lindsay competed the majority of the spring after undergoing laser surgery to remove tissue

from a heart valve.

Two starters are gone from the offensive line, but plenty of bodies remain, headed by senior center Jeremy Offutt. Other seasoned players include left guard Adam Davis and left tackle David Camacho. Senior Jorge Arceo likely will find a spot at right guard with Andrew Golembiewski filling the position at right tackle.

With talented returnees Nathan Simmons and Jamaal

Doug DeVoe



After setting an OSU freshman record with 846 rushing yards in '97, Jamaal Fobbs has his sights set on breaking the 1,000-yard barrier this fall.

Fobbs, running the ball should be a strong suit. Simmons ran for 711 yards and Fobbs rushed for an OSU freshman-record 846 yards. Senior Brian Aikins is back at fullback after scoring four touchdowns a season ago.

At wideout, the Cowboys could realize a dramatic improvement over last season.

Willie Grissom and Sean Love are seniors and senior Terrance Richardson, OSU's best receiver two years ago, is back following a season-long disciplinary suspension.

"When you have three guys who have been in the program four years, they know what to do," said Simmons. "My concern is that there are only three. There are some guys waiting in the wings who have to show up."

Without Mayes, OSU loses its flair at tight end. Garrett Steggs headlines a position also anchored by sophomore Sean Barry and freshman Marcellus Rivers.

Fewer questions linger on defense. Of the six players coming off suspension from a year ago, half are on defense.

The architect of the Cowboys' resurgence, defensive coordinator Rob Ryan, installed the '46' defense in 1997 and saw OSU improve from 97th to 20th nationally in rushing defense.

Ryan expects to coax even more testosterone out of his group, particularly at linebacker, this fall.

Starters Kenyatta Wright, Jack Golden and Tarrell Knauls are back, as is Raymond Cato, OSU's top tackler in 1996.

"It could be the best (linebacking corps) in the country," Ryan said, "not only looking at our starters but the guys backing them up."

Sophomore Justin Thomas and freshman Dewayne Levels will get their share of playing time, but Cato is the player who could make the unit special.

"He's got radar," Ryan said of Cato. "Wherever the ball is, he's on top of it. He's a huge upgrade for our team."

The departure of Jamal Williams leaves a huge hole in the defensive line. But there is plenty of depth. Cortney Mallory and Zak Akin will man the tackles. The end spots will be filled by Andre Waddle and Alton Weaver.

At cornerback, OSU must replace McQuarters and Kevin Williams, who led the Big 12 in interceptions in 1997.

Filling the gaps will be juniors Adam Edwards and Evan Howell. Seniors Trent Alexander and Ricky Thompson are back at the safety spots.

The field-goal duties will be handled by junior Tim Syndes. Sophomore Russ Schwettmann, who kicked off for the Cowboys in 1997, came out of spring as the top punter.

"Defense wins championships," Simmons said. "I put a lot of pressure on it. We have enough people if we find some answers back in the secondary. We just have to be smart enough to adjust." ■ — *By Rhett Morgan*



Bob Bevers

Tony Lindsay surprised Big 12 teams in '97 with his running and passing exploits, but now that he is the focus of opposing defenses, can he repeat last year's success?



AT A GLANCE

PROJECTED 1998 FINISH:

2nd
SOUTH DIVISION

STRENGTHS

Tony Lindsay is one of the most dangerous offensive threats in the Big 12. He is the key to an offense that includes talented running backs **Jamaal Fobbs** and **Nathan Simmons**. The linebacking corps, led by **Kenyatta Wright**, is one of the Big 12's best.

WEAKNESSES

A duo of unproven cornerbacks must replace two players who were selected in the first three rounds of the NFL draft. **R.W. McQuarters** and **Kevin Williams** were impact corners who forced opposing quarterbacks to think twice before throwing downfield.

POINT OF NO RETURN

The loss of cornerback/receiver McQuarters, who is now with the San Francisco 49ers, certainly will affect the Cowboys on defense, but it might hit them the hardest in the return game. **Jamaal Fobbs** and **Terrance Richardson** will be given the task of trying to replace McQuarters, who led the Big 12 and ranked second nationally in punt returns a year ago.

HOME SWEET HOME?

The Cowboys will play just two games at Lewis Field in the first seven weeks of the season. They will play their Oct. 5 home game against Nebraska at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Mo. The reason? OSU was guaranteed \$1.3 million for moving the game.

BACK IN THE SADDLE

Several key players return after missing last season due to suspension. The one who could have the most impact is linebacker **Raymond Cato**, who led the Cowboys with 119 tackles in 1996. Receiver **Terrance Richardson** also returns after catching 29 passes in '96.

1997 RECORD: 8-4 CONFERENCE FINISH: 5-3

A 30	@ Iowa St.	W, 21-14
S 6	@ SW Louisiana	W, 31-7
S 13	Fresno St.	W, 35-0
S 27	NE Louisiana	W, 38-7
O 4	Texas	W, 42-16
O 11	Colorado	W, 33-29
O 25	Missouri	L, 51-50 (2OT)
N 1	@ Texas A&M	L, 28-25 (OT)
N 8	@ Oklahoma	W, 30-7
N 15	Texas Tech	L, 27-3
N 22	@ Baylor	W, 24-14
D 30	vs. Purdue	L, 33-20

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TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	Sean Love	5-9 180 Sr.	LE	Alton Weaver	6-4 273 Sr.
or	Terrance Richardson	5-9 180 Sr.		Taber LeBlanc	6-2 260 Sr.
LT	David Camacho	6-7 300 Sr.	DT	Zak Akin	6-1 230 So.
	Josh Lind	6-6 279 So.		Eric Stevenson	6-2 279 So.
LG	Adam Davis	6-4 274 Jr.	DT	Cortney Mallory	6-1 289 Jr.
	Blaine Cook	6-3 275 Jr.		Taber LeBlanc	6-2 260 Sr.
C	Jeremy Offutt	6-5 295 Sr.	RE	Andre Waddle	6-2 240 Sr.
	Raynell Lavigne	6-1 288 Jr.		Zac Warner	6-4 239 So.
RG	Jorge Arceo	6-5 297 Sr.	WLB	Tarrell Knauls	6-1 235 Jr.
	Jason Johnson	6-3 275 So.		Justin Thomas	6-3 237 So.
RT	A. Golembiewski	6-5 288 Jr.	MLB	Kenyatta Wright	6-1 232 Jr.
	Bryan Phillips	6-5 285 So.		Raymond Cato	6-1 240 Jr.
TE	Garrett Steggs	6-3 235 Jr.	SLB	Jack Golden	6-1 230 Sr.
	Sean Barry	6-4 234 So.		Dewayne Levels	6-3 220 So.
WR	Willie Grissom	5-11 190 Sr.	CB	Adam Edwards	6-0 220 Jr.
	Joe Phears	6-1 200 Sr.		J.B. Flowers	6-2 180 Jr.
QB	Tony Lindsay	6-2 190 So.	FS	Ricky Thompson	6-1 180 Sr.
	Chris Chaloupka	6-2 218 Jr.		Chris Carter	6-3 220 Jr.
TB	Nathan Simmons	5-10 197 Jr.	SS	Trent Alexander	6-0 195 Sr.
	Jamaal Fobbs	5-10 180 So.		Jason Howard	6-2 180 So.
FB	Brian Aikins	6-1 245 Sr.	CB	Evan Howell	6-1 175 Jr.
	Jeremy Halferty	6-0 225 Jr.		Marcus Jones	5-9 175 So.
PK	Tim Syndes	6-2 195 Jr.	P	R. Schwettmann	6-3 204 So.

Players with starting experience in bold

OKLAHOMA SOONERS

Almost lost in the switch to the option and the '46' defense is Brandon Daniels' emergence at quarterback and the change in coordinators, which could be the most subtle, but important change in Oklahoma football.

Head coach John Blake will be much more hands-on in 1998, which is another important change taking place in Norman.

There were times in his first two seasons when Blake appeared to be distant and uncertain concerning the direction of his team.

Rarely could he make it through the depth chart without referencing an assistant coach for help. In discussing his quarterbacks, Blake typically had to confer with offensive coordinator Dick Winder.

As the upcoming season approaches, Blake appears at ease chatting about his team and the direction in which it is going.

"I think this football team has a great foundation to build from," Blake said. "I feel more comfortable with this football team than I ever have since I've become head coach."

Regardless of what happens in 1998, Blake has put his signature on this team, so much so that he has decided to also be a position coach, working with the defensive line.

Blake's optimism, however, is based upon the Sooners' return to the three-back option offense, a move that also has Sooner fans excited about the upcoming season.

Daniels wowed those who watched the Sooners' four spring scrimmages.

"Brandon was exceptional," Blake said. "Many people just saw him on the weekend at the scrimmages. I watched him every day. Many of those practices he was going against our starters. I look at his speed and the decisions he made. He made good players miss him. He was very hard

to tackle."

But it's the combination punch of Daniels and tailback De'Mond Parker that creates fascinating potential.

Parker gained 1,143 yards last year despite playing just seven games at full strength. He played two with a badly pulled stomach muscle and missed three entirely. Still, he finished ninth nationally in rushing with an average of 127 yards per game.

Last year, Parker became the first OU back to rush for

back-to-back 1,000-yard seasons since Billy Sims in 1978-79. Twice last year Parker ran for more than 200 yards, including a memorable game against Texas when he carried 31 times for 291 yards and scampered for touchdown runs of 66, 48 and 45 yards.

Fullback is solid with Jermaine Fazande and Seth Littrell returning. Fazande rushed for a career-best 491 yards, but was hobbled part of the season due to an ankle injury.

The Z-back position is more of question mark at this point. Johnnie Balous, who played line-backer in the spring, has moved back to his original position of running back. The 6-foot-1, 229-pound back is listed among the top three tailbacks. Junior Reggie Skinner was impressive

in the spring before injuring his knee.

According to the coaches, lost in the backs' success was the improvement made by the offensive line.

Blake said the new schemes are simpler than what OU has used in the past. The more conventional approach to the offense line should help the Sooners avoid some of the penalties that have hounded them over the past two years.

Scott Kempenich is No. 1 at left tackle and will play next to Adam Carpenter, who is listed ahead of C.B. Baker at left guard. Penciled in on the right side is guard Jason Bronson along with Andre Pittman at tackle. Sophomore Steve



De'Mond Parker has the opportunity to become the first running back in OU history to run for over 1,000 yards in three consecutive seasons.

Harry Lentz, Jr.

Burcham will start at center.

The receiving corps has been consolidated into one position. Jarraill Jackson, Chris Blocker, Ahmed Kabba and Eric Moore are the top receivers at this time.

Defensively, Oklahoma is hoping the '46' can make the Sooners more imposing and create more turnovers than a year ago, when they finished 111th in the nation in turnover ratio.

Up front, Kelly Gregg is OU's leader. The senior defensive tackle was the Sooners' leading tackler in 1997. At the other tackle position, the Sooners need to replace Martin Chase, who led OU with 14 sacks a year ago. Sophomore Ryan Fisher had a good spring and held the job. Arkansas transfer Jeremy Wilson is expected to be among the top two tackles, but he missed the spring due to a broken ankle.

The new defense also is expected to help sophomore defensive ends Rocky Bright and Corey Callens. As freshmen, the two struggled at times, although Bright came along late in the season.

Brandon Moore showed flashes last year of being an all-conference performer. The coaching staff has been so impressed with the 6-2, 231-pound middle linebacker that they have made him the focal point of the defense.

"No question Brandon is going to be our leader on defense," Blake said. "He's so much stronger physically and mentally."

The weakside linebacker will be Ontei Jones, a big-time hitter with 4.4 speed. Jones wowed his coaches and teammates in the spring before he broke his arm. He was so impressive that the coaches were able to move Balous back to offense.

"Onte's motor is like Kelly Gregg's. It's always going," Blake said. "He loves to play football and he plays full-speed. He's good and he's aware of what's going on around him. I feel pretty good about him back there."

The secondary is experienced with starting corners Mike Woods and Corey T. Ivy back along with safeties Gana Joseph and Terry White.

A big concern for OU is the kicking game, which special teams coach Pete McGinnis compares to housework.

"No one notices it until it's not done," McGinnis said.

Freshman Jeff Ferguson and sophomore walkon Steve Daniels were inconsistent this spring. Ferguson has the stronger leg, but has been more erratic.

Punting is even scarier, where Ferguson has shown some basic mechanical problems which McGinnis believes will need to be corrected in order for him to be successful.

The combination of a lighter schedule and a potentially explosive offense offers the Sooners a chance to give their fans something that they haven't been able to enjoy since 1993 — a winning season. ■ — *By Dan O'Kane*



Joel Capra

OU coaches are counting on senior Kelly Gregg's experience and leadership to anchor a starting defensive line that features two sophomores and one freshman.



AT A GLANCE

PROJECTED 1998 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

The Sooners have a potentially dominant rushing attack with **De'Mond Parker** and **Brandon Daniels**. The secondary is experienced with all four starters returning from last season.

WEAKNESSES

It is no secret that the Sooners are extremely concerned about the kicking game. OU finished 106th nationally in net punting a year ago, and freshman **Jeff Ferguson** hasn't offered much hope that that ranking will improve in 1998. The same holds true for **Steve Daniels** in the field goal department.

MOORE OR LESS

With Daniels entrenched as the No. 1 quarterback, OU coaches moved senior Eric Moore to receiver in order to keep his talents in the lineup. Moore, who did practice some at quarterback during the spring, is currently the Sooners' fourth all-time leading passer with 2,556 yards.

STARTING FRESH

Oklahoma has an excellent chance to jump out to a good start in 1998. Their first three opponents, North Texas, TCU and California, had a combined record of 8-25 last season. The Sooners also benefit by not having Nebraska on their schedule for the first time since 1927.

TIGHT END TRANSITION

Tight end Stephen Alexander finished his OU career with 104 receptions, good for second on the all-time Sooner list. With the switch to the option this year, it is unlikely that the tight end will catch many passes. In fact, tight ends did not catch a pass while running with the first unit all spring.

3rd
SOUTH
DIVISION

1997 RECORD: 4-8 CONFERENCE FINISH: 2-6

A 23	vs. Northwestern*	L, 24-0
S 6	Syracuse	W, 36-34
S 20	@ California	L, 40-36
S 27	Louisville	W, 35-14
O 4	@ Kansas	L, 20-17
O 11	vs. Texas#	L, 27-24
O 18	Baylor	W, 24-23
O 25	Kansas St.	L, 26-7
N 1	@ Nebraska	L, 69-7
N 8	Oklahoma St.	L, 30-7
N 15	Texas A&M	L, 51-7
N 22	@ Texas Tech	W, 32-21

* Pigskin Classic - Chicago, IL
Cotton Bowl - Dallas, TX

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	Jarraill Jackson	5-8 185 Jr.	LE	Darryl Bright	6-4 260 So.
	Chris Blocker	6-1 212 Sr.		Cornelius Burton	6-5 276 Jr.
LT	Scott Kempenich	6-6 312 So.	LT	Kelly Gregg	6-0 280 Sr.
	Al Baysinger	6-4 330 So.		Greg Muhammad	6-2 251 Fr.
LG	Adam Carpenter	6-3 304 So.	RT	Ryan Fisher	6-3 267 So.
	C.B. Baker	6-2 286 So.		Jeremy Wilson	OR - Angelo Banks
C	Stephen Burcham	6-4 273 So.	RE	Corey Callens	6-3 262 So.
	Reese Travis	6-2 271 So.		Bary Holleyman	6-5 276 Fr.
RG	Jason Bronson	6-2 271 So.	WLB	Onte Jones	5-11 200 So.
	Jay Smith	6-3 290 Sr.		Dale Allen	6-2 224 Sr.
RT	Andre Pittman	6-5 321 So.	MLB	Brandon Moore	6-2 222 So.
	Tim Conley	6-6 324 Sr.		Tony Peters	6-0 234 Fr.
TE	Jason Freeman	6-3 240 Sr.	SLB	Armand Spence	6-2 232 So.
	Matt Anderson	6-1 250 Jr.		Sedric Jones	6-4 248 Jr.
QB	Brandon Daniels	5-10 217 Jr.	LCB	Mike Woods	5-11 178 Jr.
	Jarrod Reese	6-3 209 Fr.		Cedric Stephens	5-9 185 Sr.
FB	Jermaine Fzandee	6-0 260 Jr.	SS	Gana Joseph	6-0 210 Sr.
	Seth Littrell	6-0 219 So.		Jacirith Joseph	5-11 184 Jr.
TB	De'Mond Parker	5-10 180 Sr.	FS	Terry White	5-10 190 Sr.
	Johnnie Balous	6-1 229 Jr.		Rodney Rideau	5-10 190 Jr.
ZB	Reggie Skinner	5-9 229 Jr.	RCB	Corey T. Ivy	5-10 185 Sr.
	Dwight McKissic	5-11 211 Fr.		Pee Wee Woods	5-8 179 Jr.
PK	Jeff Ferguson	6-0 172 Fr.	P	Steve Daniels	5-10 179 So.

Players with starting experience in bold

TEXAS LONGHORNS

The ongoing renovation of Darrell K. Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium wasn't the only construction project taking place in Austin this spring.

After climbing to the top of the Big 12 mountain in 1996, Texas fell back to earth last season. The Longhorns' 4-7 record represented the school's worst mark since 1988 and resulted in the reassignment of head coach John Mackovic.

A season that began with a No. 12 ranking and visions of a national championship spun out of control after a 66-3 home loss to UCLA in the second game.

The downward spiral continued as Texas won just three of the last nine games.

The restoration project began with the hiring of head coach Mack Brown, who was lured away from North Carolina after compiling a 54-18 record over the last six seasons.

"Football is really impressive here," Brown said of Texas. "When we ask our fans to do something, they're going to respond. In turn, when people want to win so badly, they can have high expectations."

In order to meet those expectations, Brown went to work immediately after being named the 28th head coach in Texas history. At the time, the recruiting season was already in full swing, but Brown responded by inking one of the top classes in the nation.

It was then time for Brown to take care of his next order of business: convince All-America tailback Ricky Williams, who had been quoted as saying he would leave school if Mackovic was not the coach, to stay in Austin for his senior season.

After conferring with his family and getting a chance to sit down with Brown, Williams passed up the NFL for an opportunity to break Earl Campbell's career rushing record and win Texas' first Heisman Trophy since 1977.

Williams broke several Texas records en route to leading the nation with 1,893 rushing yards and 152 points scored

in 1997. He enters the fall just 289 yards shy of replacing Campbell as the school's all-time leading rusher.

Once again, the Texas offense will hitch itself to the back of Williams and let him carry the load. The man who has the job of handing him the ball is senior Richard Walton. At 6-foot-5, Walton has good size and a strong arm. He also has experience, having seen action in 19 career games.

"Richard's had a tremendous spring," Brown said. "He's handled the offense very well. There's a lot of pressure on him as a senior

quarterback and he's handled it very well."

After serving as James Brown's understudy for the last three seasons, Walton is anxious to show his stuff this fall.

"My dad has always said to be patient and take the time when it comes — and now it's come," Walton said. "It's kind of sad because I know this is my last season, but at the same time it's very exciting."

Joining Walton and Williams in the backfield is junior fullback Ricky Brown, a tough runner and strong lead blocker.

The Texas backs will run behind one of the biggest and most experienced offensive lines in the nation. Four starters return, led by senior tackle Jay Humphrey. He will be joined by seniors Ben Adams and Octavious

Bishop and junior Roger Roesler. Senior Russell Gaskamp is the likely starter at center after missing last year with a back injury.

Once a strength at Texas, the receiving corps was a liability in 1997. The combination of injuries and a lack of proven talent forced freshmen Jamel Thompson and Kwame Cavil into duty. Cavil came on late, setting a Texas freshman record with 23 receptions, and he cemented a starting job this spring. He will start opposite Wane McGarity, who is coming off of a knee injury that forced him to miss the final eight games last season.



Ricky Williams' goals of owning the UT career rushing record and winning the Heisman Trophy were enough to put the NFL on hold in '98.

At tight end, senior Derek Lewis will assume full-time duties this fall after starting three games last year.

While the offense requires some fine tuning, the defense needs a complete overhaul following a season in which it allowed 30 or more points six times and ranked 10th in the Big 12 in total defense.

"We're as thin on defense as anyone in the country," Brown said. "We have to create some depth. We're going to be playing in the heat and we need to have people who can come in when guys get tired."

Texas gave up 4.7 yards per rush and 241.5 yards per game on the ground last season, each ranking as the second-worst totals in the program's 105-year history. Those numbers were due in large part to early-season injuries to run-stuffers Chris Akins and Casey Hampton, who was

granted a medical redshirt year. Hampton returns to start at tackle along with junior Cedric Woodard.

The end spots will be manned by juniors Aaron Humphrey and Chris Smith, a former tight end.

One of the biggest surprises this spring was redshirt freshman De'Andre Lewis. A former fullback, Lewis was moved to weak-side linebacker and won the starting job. Aaron Babino moved from safety to strongside linebacker, where the coaches like his speed. Lewis and Babino will flank senior Dusty Renfro, who led Texas with 116 tackles in 1997 and has started 18 straight games.

A major concern last season was a secondary ravaged by the departure of all four starters. This year,

with five players returning who started at least one game a year ago, the secondary has something it sorely lacked in 1997 — experience.

Sophomore Donald McCowen started 10 games at free safety, but lost his job this spring to Quentin Jammer, who played exclusively at corner as a true freshman last year. Jammer will be paired with Tony Holmes, the lone senior in the defensive backfield. Sophomore Joe Walker, who drew raves from Texas coaches for his play during the spring, is penciled in at cornerback.

"Joe Walker played with a pulled muscle in his leg this spring and he still looked great," Brown said. "Quentin Jammer got better every day, Tony Holmes is a competitor and we have a great battle between Jeremy Jones and Chris Butcher for the last spot."

Sophomore Kris Stockton, who sat out a redshirt year last season, will serve the dual role of kicker and punter.

When the Longhorns open the season against New Mexico State, Texas fans will undoubtedly be impressed with the changes made to Royal-Memorial Stadium. The only question is whether or not the fans will feel the same way about the team on the field. ■ — *By Shawn Heilbron*



UT Sports Information

The man on the hot seat in Austin this season will be Richard Walton, who must replace four-year starter and career passing leader James Brown at quarterback.



AT A GLANCE

PROJECTED 1998 FINISH:

4th
SOUTH DIVISION

STRENGTHS

Ricky Williams single-handedly gives the Longhorns a chance to win every game they play. Williams' skills, combined with a strong offensive line, give Texas an opportunity to win the time of possession battle and, more importantly, more than four games.

WEAKNESSES

The inexperienced linebacking corps must do a better job of stopping the run this season or they will — literally and figuratively — get run over in the Big 12.

WALTON'S WORLD

Richard Walton is finally the man in Austin after the graduation of **James Brown**. With Texas fans eager to forget last season, the pressure is on Walton to produce. If he can't, **Mack Brown** will have no choice but to turn to inexperienced redshirt freshmen **Greg Cicero** and **Major Applewhite**.

MARGIN OF ERROR

Texas finished 11th in the Big 12 in turnover margin in 1997. The Horns turned the ball over 34 times and registered just 14 takeaways. Brown would love to see those numbers reversed this fall, but one number that must come down is 17 — the number of times Texas quarterbacks were intercepted in 1997.

NUMBER 34

The number that will be on Williams' chest this season after wearing No. 11 during his first three years at Texas. Williams, who wore 34 in high school, hopes the number brings him the same success during his senior season at Texas that it brought **Earl Campbell** in the NFL. The only question is which number will UT retire next year: 11 or 34?

1997 RECORD: 4-7 CONFERENCE FINISH: 2-6

S 6	Rutgers	W, 48-14
S 13	UCLA	L, 66-3
S 27	@ Rice	W, 38-31
O 4	@ Oklahoma St.	L, 42-16
O 11	Oklahoma*	W, 27-24
O 18	@ Missouri	L, 37-29
O 25	Colorado	L, 47-30
N 1	@ Baylor	L, 23-21
N 8	Texas Tech	L, 24-10
N 15	Kansas	W, 45-31
N 22	@ Texas A&M	L, 27-16

* Cotton Bowl • Dallas, Texas

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

FL	Kwame Cavil	6-2	200	So.	DE	Aaron Humphrey	6-3	245	Jr.
	Ryan Nunez	5-9	174	Jr.		Brandon Nava	6-3	240	Jr.
LT	Octavious Bishop	6-5	321	Sr.	DT	Cedric Woodard	6-3	280	Jr.
	Leonard Davis	6-6	350	So.		Shaun Rogers	6-4	300	So.
LG	Roger Roesler	6-5	308	Jr.	DT	Casey Hampton	6-1	307	So.
	Travis Wood	6-3	290	Sr.		Gray Mosier	6-5	271	Sr.
C	Russell Gaskamp	6-4	288	Sr.	DE	Chris Smith	6-5	245	Jr.
	Marcel Blanchard	6-4	290	So.		J.J. Kelly	6-2	237	So.
RG	Ben Adams	6-5	305	Sr.	LB	Aaron Babino	6-1	215	Jr.
	Joe Hubbard	6-4	301	So.		Michael Watson	6-1	215	Sr.
RT	Jay Humphrey	6-7	305	Sr.	MLB	Dusty Renfro	6-0	231	Sr.
	Cory Quye	6-6	300	So.		Josh Spoerl	6-1	240	So.
TE	Derek Lewis	6-2	235	Sr.	LB	De'Andre Lewis	6-1	225	Fr.
	Derrick Scott	6-3	230	Sr.		Cedric Mitchell	6-0	200	Fr.
QB	Richard Walton	6-5	225	Sr.	CB	Joe Walker	6-0	175	So.
	Greg Cicero	6-4	195	Fr.		Levar Jenkins	5-10	180	So.
TB	Ricky Williams	6-0	225	Sr.	FS	Quentin Jammer	6-1	180	So.
	Hodges Mitchell	5-7	180	So.		Donald McCowen	5-9	205	So.
FB	Ricky Brown	6-0	215	Jr.	SS	Tony Holmes	5-9	180	Sr.
	Maurice Gordon	6-1	215	Fr.		Greg Brown	6-2	190	So.
SE	Wane McGarity	5-9	190	Sr.	CB	Chris Butcher	6-0	191	Jr.
	Bryan White	5-10	180	Sr.		Jeremy Jones	5-9	162	Sr.
PK	Kris Stockton	5-9	185	So.	P	Kris Stockton	5-9	185	So.

Players with starting experience in bold

TEXAS TECH RED RAIDERS

All Texas Tech had to do to win the Big 12 South Division on Nov. 22 was beat a struggling Oklahoma team that had lost four consecutive games.

The Sooners had little — if anything — to play for and hadn't won a road game all year. Considering those factors, who can blame the Red Raiders for stocking their locker room with champagne and making room in the trophy case for a major memento from the Big 12 Conference?

But the Raiders did something that day in Jones Stadium that has become a trademark of many Tech teams recently: They self-destructed, blowing a big lead and losing a game that they should have won.

"That was the story of our season last year," defensive end Montae Reagor said. "We won some big games and lost some games that we had no business losing. It was very frustrating to be so inconsistent."

Inconsistency was the Red Raiders' middle name in 1997. Tech beat bowl participants Texas A&M and Oklahoma State and narrowly missed beating top 10 finisher Kansas State. But, in addition to Oklahoma, Tech lost to North Texas, which was competing in just its second season as a Division I-A program.

"There's no doubt that we have to find a way to be more consistent this year," head coach Spike Dykes said. "We really went on a roller coaster ride last year. And the thing about those roller coasters is that sometimes they're a lot of fun. But sometimes, they can make you feel sick."

An extended NCAA investigation was certainly another sickening element of last year. But so was the Red Raiders' 1-2 start — the eighth consecutive season Tech has begun the year with a 1-2 record.

What's more, Tech loses 12 starters, including quarterback Zebbie Lethridge with the most wins in school history, from last year's 6-5 team. So, based on talent alone,

there could be even more sickening times in store for the Red Raiders.

On the other hand, it's not inconceivable that Tech could dramatically improve its record in 1998.

Texas Tech replaces Tennessee, Nebraska and Kansas State — top 10 teams that beat the Raiders in 1997 — with UTEP, Iowa State and Colorado. With the first three games of the season coming against UTEP, North Texas and Fresno State, this is the year Tech should break the streak of 1-2 starts.

"We better not be 1-2," Reagor said. "But we can't take anything for granted. Considering some of the games we lost last year, we need to play every game like it's for the national championship. We're a good team, but we're not good enough to take anybody lightly."

Barring a collapse, Tech should be 5-0 before the schedule gets really tough. Of course, with Texas Tech's inconsistent history, what's really dangerous is to make any concrete assumptions.

"I've learned my lesson about making predictions," Dykes said. "All I'll say right now is that we're really excited about 1998, and we're thrilled to put 1997 behind us. This could be a special year for us if we get some key people to step up."

The biggest key to a special year will be finding someone to step into the vacancy left by four-year starting quarterback Lethridge.

"We'll miss Zebbie's experience — there isn't much doubt about that," Dykes said. "He was a very versatile guy who started for us a long time. But we have to move on, and I feel pretty good about those guys who are competing for the job."

The likely candidate to start the season at quarterback is junior Rob Peters. He lacks experience under center, but he may be more versatile than Lethridge. Peters has played

Bob Beavours



In his first season with the Red Raiders a year ago, tailback Ricky Williams rushed for a Texas Tech freshman single-season record of 894 yards.

nine different positions in his two years in Lubbock.

While quarterback is a concern, running back is not. Diminutive sophomore tailback Ricky Williams returns after earning freshman All-America honors. In the history of Texas Tech football, no freshman has rushed for more yards than Williams' 894 in 1997.

"I know there's another Ricky Williams in this league," Dykes said of Texas' Heisman Trophy candidate, "but we sure like ours."

Converted linebacker Jonathan Hawkins played well at fullback last year but will be hard-pressed to keep his job with the return of junior Sammy Morris, who missed all of 1997 because of academic problems.

Perhaps the key player in Tech's offense, though, is senior receiver Donnie Hart. The sure-handed Hart began

1997 with 33 catches for 395 yards in his first four games, but a hamstring injury kept him out of four of the final six games.

Up front, the Raiders will be bigger, but not necessarily better. The projected starting offensive line averages about 310 pounds, but with three starters gone from last year, the offensive front is a concern.

Conversely, the defensive line is one of the team's strengths. Reagor is one of the most exciting big-play defensive linemen in the country. A second-team All-America selection last year, Reagor led the Big 12 with five fumbles caused and was fourth in the league with 10.5 sacks. Tech's other defensive end, junior Taurus Rucker, is an extremely solid player who

Incumbent Jonathan Hawkins (above) will be pressed by junior Sammy Morris, who averaged 7.8 yards a carry in 1996, in the fall for the starting fullback position.

finished with 73 stops last year.

The problem is in the interior, where Tech must replace Cody McGuire and junior Stoney Garland, whose career was ended by a car accident last Thanksgiving.

At linebacker, the Raiders are questionable in the middle and solid on the outside. Junior Kyle Shipley and freshman Sam Hooks will battle for the job at middle linebacker. Tech has experience on the outside with juniors Tim Duffie and Kevin McCullar and senior Ty Ardoin.

The biggest worry for the Red Raiders' defense is in the secondary. The departures of Tony Darden, Dane Johnson and Duane Price could leave the Tech secondary as vulnerable as a trailer park in a tornado alley.

Senior Darwin Brown led the Big 12 in pass breakups in 1997, but he is Tech's only proven defensive back.

"We'll have to have some young guys step up for us in the secondary," Dykes said. "We need to find some guys in that unit who can consistently make plays."

Of course, the same thing could be said for the entire team. If there's anything the Raiders will be searching for in 1998, it's consistency. Until they find it, a good rule of thumb is to expect the unexpected. ■ — *By Rusty Burson*



Bob Beavours



AT A GLANCE

PROJECTED 1998 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

In **Montae Reagor** and **Taurus Rucker**, the Red Raiders may have the best pair of book ends of any defensive line in the conference. A running back combo of **Ricky Williams**, **Jonathan Hawkins** and **Sammy Morris** also puts Tech in an enviable situation.

WEAKNESSES

Without a proven quarterback or secondary, Tech may be in trouble. **Donnie Hart** can catch the ball, but can anyone get it to him? And who are those guys in the secondary?

A LEG UP

Despite the loss of **Tony Rogers**, who finished the year as Tech's place-kicker, the Raiders should be better off in 1998. That's because of the healthy return of senior **Jaret Greaser**, who broke his leg last year at Nebraska. With career-long field goals of 55 and 53 yards, Greaser could be one of the best kickers in the Big 12 South.

TAKEAWAY TECH

Over the course of the last five seasons, Texas Tech owns the nation's best turnover margin. The Raiders have a plus-52 margin since 1993. Ohio State is second at plus-40. Tech again will need to win the battle of turnovers this season to be competitive in the Big 12.

NUMBER 21

Twenty-one freshmen saw significant playing time last year for the Red Raiders and 11 freshmen started at least one game. Against eventual national champion Nebraska, 19 Tech freshmen played. The best thing about freshmen, of course, is that they become sophomores.

5th
SOUTH
DIVISION

1997 RECORD: 6-5
CONFERENCE FINISH: 5-3

A 30	@ Tennessee	L, 52-17
S 13	SW Louisiana	W, 59-14
S 20	North Texas	L, 30-27
O 4	@ Baylor	W, 35-14
O 11	Kansas	W, 17-7
O 18	@ Nebraska	L, 29-0
O 25	Texas A&M	W, 16-13
N 1	Kansas St.	L, 13-2
N 8	@ Texas	W, 24-10
N 15	@ Oklahoma St.	W, 27-3
N 22	Oklahoma	L, 32-11

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

TE	Kyle Allamon	6-3	247	Jr.	LE	Montae Reagor	6-2	254	Sr.
	Cole Roberts	6-6	245	So.		Devin Lemons	6-1	220	So.
LT	Jonathan Gray	6-5	363	So.	NT	Cody Patton	6-6	310	Jr.
	Matt Heider	6-4	277	Fr.		Terry Patton	6-2	301	Jr.
LG	Curtis Lowery	6-4	320	Jr.	DT	Kris Kocurek	6-5	270	So.
	John DePasquale	6-4	280	So.		Jason Jones	6-2	275	So.
C	Robert Haddon	6-3	288	Sr.	RE	Taurus Rucker	6-0	251	Jr.
	Kyle Sanders	6-1	281	So.		Kenneth Kacal	6-1	230	Sr.
RG	Erik Carruth	6-4	292	Sr.	SLB	Ty Ardoin	6-0	200	Sr.
	Dan Martin	6-3	321	Jr.		Robby Cartwright	6-1	207	Sr.
RT	Steve McFadden	6-4	327	So.	MLB	Kyle Shipley	6-2	230	Jr.
	Anthony Patricio	6-3	279	Sr.		Sam Hooks	6-3	247	Fr.
SE	Donnie Hart	6-1	194	Sr.	WLB	Tim Duffie	5-11	203	Jr.
	Tim Baker	6-5	194	So.		Kevin McCullar	6-3	240	Jr.
FL	Derek Dorris	6-2	185	So.	R	Keith Cockrum	6-2	204	Jr.
	Dee Jackson	6-2	186	So.		Reagan Bownds	5-10	190	Jr.
QB	Rob Peters	6-3	236	Jr.	RC	Darwin Brown	5-11	174	Sr.
	Matt Tittle	6-3	215	Jr.		Antwan Alexander	6-0	176	So.
IB	Ricky Williams	5-7	182	So.	LC	Osar Solis	5-8	180	Jr.
	Rickey Hunter	5-10	184	So.		Brian Giddens	5-10	182	So.
FB	Jonathan Hawkins	5-11	219	So.	FS	John Norman	6-1	197	So.
	Sammy Morris	6-0	212	Jr.		Mark Washington	5-11	192	So.
PK	Jaret Greaser	6-0	180	Sr.	P	Jeremy Hernandez	5-11	208	Sr.

Players with starting experience in bold

BAYLOR BEARS

The "No Fear" logo has become quite popular in recent years, showing up on car bumpers, T-shirts, and billboards. But perhaps it would be most appropriate on the helmets of Baylor football players this season.

After all, nothing in 1998 could possibly cause the Bears to tremble in terror. Not after last year, when they played one of the most unmerciful schedules in college football.

In 1997, the Bears opened the season against Miami, played eventual co-national champions Michigan and Nebraska in a three-week stretch and concluded the year with three consecutive games against bowl-bound Big 12 opponents.

The 1998 schedule has some difficult games, but it's a piece of cake in comparison. Who cares if Baylor must go on the road to face perennial national powers Colorado, Texas and Notre Dame? What's the big deal if Big 12 title hopefuls Texas A&M and Kansas State come to Waco?

Bring it on, Baylor players and coaches say. The Bears may not have the talent to beat the "big boys" on their schedule, but they won't back down.

"Maybe the biggest benefit of playing that schedule last year is that our kids won't be intimidated by anything they see this year," Baylor head coach Dave Roberts said. "Of course, we love a challenge, and we will face a variety of very difficult challenges in 1998. But to be perfectly honest, I'm kind of pleased those teams are gone from our schedule this year."

"A challenge is one thing. Playing Michigan and Nebraska in a three-week stretch is more like a death wish. But we gained a lot from those experiences, and we've obviously lived to see another year."

Indeed, the Bears are alive and probably much better off than they were a year ago. Of course, when you're starting point is rock bottom, there's nowhere to go but up. And rest assured, Roberts took over a program in 1997 that had

sunk to some rather substantial depths.

It's been four years since Baylor last played in a bowl game, seven years since the Bears won at least eight games and 18 years since their last conference championship.

None of those streaks are likely to end in 1998. But with the return of 13 starters and the addition of an impressive class of JUCO signees, there's reason to believe the 1998 Bears will be much improved from last year's 2-9 squad.

Baylor's success may be largely dependent on the 10

junior college players Roberts signed in February. The Bears need some immediate help, and Roberts is counting on JUCO productivity.

"I hope all of those junior college kids pan out," Roberts said. "We need some big performances from them. How effective they are will play a major role in our success or failure this season."

That is especially true on defense, where the Bears must make dramatic improvements against the run. Two years ago, Baylor finished 111th — dead last nationally — in rush defense, and in 1997, only improved to 110th.

"We were too soft in too many areas last year," Roberts said. "To win in this league you have to play defense, and our rushing defense must improve."

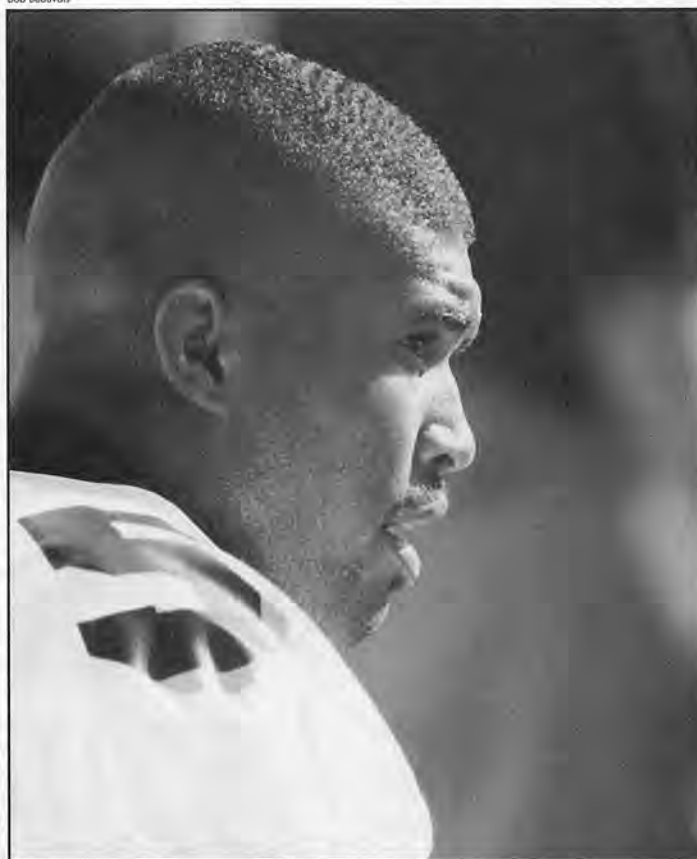
Baylor's defensive line struggles were the primary culprit in the Bears' inability to stop the run. So, Roberts put a heavy emphasis on recruiting defensive line help, signing four junior college players and six high school defensive linemen.

Another key area of concern is along the offensive front; Baylor quarterbacks were sacked 27 times last year.

As with the defensive front, Roberts addressed his offensive line inconsistencies in the recruiting period by signing seven offensive linemen.

The Bears return three of their starting offensive linemen

Bob Beavins



Baylor fans will finally get to see whether the accolades that accompanied quarterback Odell James to Waco two years ago were justified.

NONCONFERENCE OPPONENTS

When Nebraska emerges from the south tunnel at Memorial Stadium for the first time this fall, little attention will be given to the Cornhuskers' opponent standing on the other side of the newly named Tom Osborne Field.

Most of the focus will be on Frank Solich, who last winter replaced the man for whom the field was named, and whoever starts at quarterback for the Huskers.

Incidentally, in case you forgot to pay attention to the schedule, on Aug. 29, when the Solich era officially begins, the Huskers open the season at home against Louisiana Tech in the Eddie Robinson Football Classic. The game was not originally on the Huskers' schedule, but was added in late May after Nebraska coaches and players agreed to accept an invitation to play in the game.

Before the Huskers travel to Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Mo., to play Oklahoma State in their Big 12 opener, they will face four opponents guaranteed to get Nebraska ready for conference action.

Following their opener against Louisiana Tech, the Huskers will host Alabama-Birmingham, a third-year Division I program. Nebraska will then travel to face California on Sept. 12 and then, following a bye week, will face Washington at home.

The Huskers and Solich, who is in his first year as a college head coach after spending the last 19 years as an assistant under Osborne at Nebraska, have their work cut out for them this fall. During this decade, Nebraska is 29-3 against teams from outside its conference, yet all three losses (to Arizona State in 1996 and to Washington in 1991 and 1992) have come against Pac-10 teams.

Here's a look at what the Huskers will face in the first four games of the Solich era:



Louisiana Tech 1997 Record: 9-2

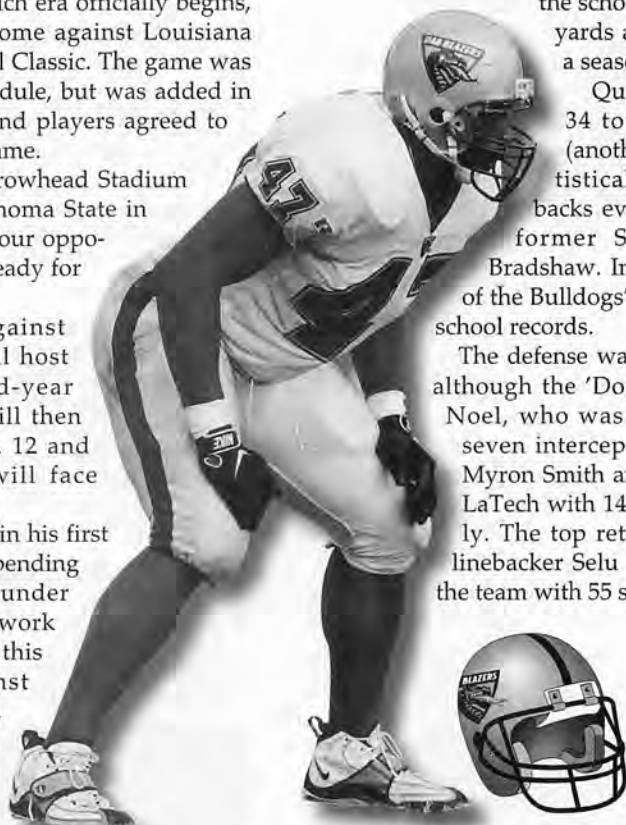
The unheralded Bulldogs finished the 1997 campaign with a stellar record of 9-2, including a perfect 4-0 mark at home in Joe Aillet Stadium. (The 'Dogs were 5-0 counting their "home" game in Shreveport, La.)

A finalist for the *Sporting News*' National Coach of the Year Award, head coach Gary Crowton had his name mentioned in connection with job openings at Arkansas, Louisville and Utah State, but chose to remain at Louisiana Tech.

The star of the team is senior receiver Troy Edwards, whose 23 career touchdowns are the most in school history. Edwards also ranks among the school's top five in career receptions and receiving yards, and holds the school mark for catches, receiving yards and receiving touchdowns in a season.

Quarterback Tim Rattay threw 34 touchdown passes last year (another school record) and is statistically among the top quarterbacks ever at a school that produced former Super Bowl MVP Terry Bradshaw. In his first season at the helm of the Bulldogs' offense, Rattay set or tied 28 school records.

The defense was quietly productive in 1997, although the 'Dogs must replace safety John Noel, who was second in the nation with seven interceptions a year ago, as well as Myron Smith and Gomeya Cooper, who led LaTech with 148 and 129 tackles, respectively. The top returning tackler is strongside linebacker Selu Alofipo, who was fourth on the team with 55 stops a year ago.



Junior linebacker Brian Smith, who led Alabama-Birmingham with a career-high 114 tackles in 1997, has started every game in his collegiate career.

Ala.-Birmingham 1997 Record: 5-6

The Blazer squad that will face Nebraska will be experienced. Fifteen starters, including eight on offense, return for Alabama-Birmingham. That doesn't mean the Blazers are ready to open their season on

the road against the defending national champions.

One thing Nebraska can expect to see out of the Blazers is a wide-open, pass-happy attack led by sophomore quarterback Lee Jolly. A year ago, Jolly started 10 games and threw for 1,530 yards.

Jolly missed spring practice because he played baseball, but that doesn't mean Alabama-Birmingham coach Watson

from 1997. But those players — senior guards Kelvin Garmon and Derrick Fletcher and junior center Toby Summers — will be pushed for playing time by the newcomers.

Aside for the potential problems along both sides of the line of scrimmage, the Bears are apparently in pretty good shape — especially if the “quarterback of the future” emerges as a big-play threat.

Four-year starting quarterback Jeff Watson is gone. But that's not necessarily bad news for Baylor fans.

Watson was gritty, but he wasn't a game-breaker. Sophomore Odell James, on the other hand, has the physical tools to take control of any contest.

An incredibly gifted athlete, James was called “the most versatile quarterback in the country” by the *National Recruiting Advisor* when he signed with Baylor in 1996. But reconstructive knee surgery that year sidelined him and dramatically slowed his development.

James saw limited action last year, but with his first full spring practice under his belt, James appears ready to emerge as a dangerous weapon.

If James can take control of the offense quickly, the Bears could surprise some teams in the Big 12. Senior Jermaine Alfred will serve as an experienced backup at quarterback. But there's no question that James is Baylor's future and, at long last, present hopes rest largely on his shoulders.

While the Bears are devoid of depth in some areas, tailback is one position at which Roberts had

few concerns entering the spring. Speedy sophomore Darrell Bush returns after a strong 1997 season, but in April, juniors Elijah Burkins and Dexter Ford were suspended indefinitely.

Bush was a pleasant surprise last year, leading the team with 693 yards rushing in just nine games. Most impressively, he averaged 6.7 yards per carry and broke Walter Abercrombie's school freshman rushing record.

Baylor's top two receivers, seniors Derrius Thompson and Morris Anderson, both return after finishing among the top 10 in the Big 12 in receptions per game last season.

On the other side of the ball, sophomore middle line-backer Kris Micheaux returns following an outstanding freshman season. Senior Clarence Cruse and junior Jason Jackson are adequate returning starters on the outside.

With the healthy return of senior free safety Nikia Codie and the continued development of junior strong safety Rodney Smith, the Bears' secondary may be the strength of the defense entering the fall.

Baylor's kicking game also is in excellent shape with the return of place-kicker Matt Bryant and punter Kyle Atteberry. — *By Rusty Burson*



Bob Seouvois

Baylor will be looking to youngsters including guard Luke Nichols (above) and JUCO transfers to solidify an offensive line that gave up 27 sacks last season.



AT A GLANCE

PROJECTED 1998 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

If **Odell James** begins to live up to his potential, the Bears have an intriguing — and perhaps even threatening — group of offensive skill position players to run **Dave Roberts'** multiple-attack system.

WEAKNESSES

Maybe the JUCO players will turn things around. But until Baylor proves it on the field, both sides of the line of scrimmage must be considered prime areas of concern.

SHOWING PROGRESS

Barring a “Miracle on the Brazos II,” Baylor will not be in the running for a Big 12 South title or even a bowl game late in the season. But it's a team that should show some major signs of progress in Roberts' second season. The Bears could easily double their win total from last year (two) and jump up and bite virtually anyone on their schedule.

PASSING GRADE

Baylor must be able to throw the ball effectively this season to keep teams from ganging up along the line of scrimmage to stop the run. James' versatility also will help stretch opposing defenses. Look for quarterback draws, options and James improvising on the run. **Jermaine Alfred** gives Baylor an experienced backup who can step in and run the offense should the need arise.

MAGIC NUMBER: 437.7

The amount of total offensive yards Baylor opponents averaged in 1997. The Bears yielded an equally alarming 275 rushing yards per game. Those numbers will need to come down if the Bears are to have any chance to increase their number of wins in 1998.

6th
SOUTH
DIVISION

1997 RECORD: 2-9 CONFERENCE FINISH: 1-7

A 30	Miami	L, 45-14
S 6	@ Fresno St.	W, 37-35
S 20	@ Michigan	L, 38-3
O 4	Texas Tech	L, 35-14
O 11	Nebraska	L, 49-21
O 18	@ Oklahoma	L, 24-23
O 25	@ Iowa St.	L, 24-17
N 1	Texas	W, 23-21
N 8	@ Texas A&M	L, 38-10
N 15	@ Missouri	L, 42-24
N 22	Oklahoma St.	L, 24-14

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

TE	Don Arroyo	6-3 231 Jr.	LE	Justin Snow	6-3 230 Jr.
	Andrew Obriotti	6-2 228 Fr.		Clifton Rubin	6-0 224 Sr.
QT	Kelvin Garmon	6-2 298 Sr.	DT	Dwight Johnson	6-4 271 Jr.
	Greg Jarman	6-5 270 Fr.		Demetrio Phillips	6-3 249 Fr.
QG	Luke Nichols	6-4 300 So.	NT	LeTroy Hamilton	6-0 260 Sr.
	Mike Love	6-3 307 Jr.		James Calvin	6-1 275 So.
C	Toby Summers	6-2 255 Jr.	RE	Charles Foster	6-1 238 Jr.
	Chris Sampy	6-1 270 Sr.		Brian Sutton	6-4 268 Jr.
SG	Carlos Rocha	6-3 293 Jr.	SLB	McKinley Bowie	6-0 237 So.
	Scott Childress	6-4 325 Jr.		Jason Jackson	6-0 234 Jr.
ST	Derrick Fletcher	6-6 350 Sr.	MLB	Kris Micheaux	6-1 233 So.
	Steve York	6-4 293 Fr.		Eric Clay	6-1 232 So.
QB	Odell James	6-3 217 So.	WLB	Leonard Hill	6-2 211 Sr.
	Jermaine Alfred	6-1 216 Jr.		Andre Taylor	6-1 232 Jr.
TB	Darrell Bush	5-8 186 So.	CB	Gary Baxter	6-1 180 So.
	David Quinene	5-9 208 Jr.		Allan Pace	5-9 180 Fr.
FB	Derek Lagway	6-1 224 So.	FS	Kenyada Parker	6-2 208 Sr.
	Brandon Thompson	6-2 274 So.		Tommie Black	6-0 209 So.
WR	Morris Anderson	6-1 191 Sr.	SS	Rodney Smith	6-0 223 Jr.
	Martin Dosssett	5-11 170 So.		Nikia Codie	6-3 207 Sr.
WR	D. Thompson	6-2 210 Sr.	CB	Robert Neal	5-9 197 So.
	Garner Simpkins	5-9 177 Sr.		Daniel Wilturner	5-9 180 Fr.
PK	Matt Bryant	5-9 190 Jr.	P	Kyle Atteberry	6-0 175 Jr.

Players with starting experience in bold

Brown won't rely on his quarterback this fall.

"We have to keep improving our passing game," Brown said. "We will continue to try to be 50 percent run and 50 percent pass, but we will lean more toward the passing game this year."

The Blazers have attempted to upgrade their receiving corps. Junior Darrius Malone, who caught 28 passes for 435 yards and three touchdowns last season, is UAB's top threat. To increase his team's speed, Brown moved former running back Maurice Gallery to receiver to help carry some of the load.

UAB can also run the ball. Junior Lucious Foster began last season as the starting fullback, but moved to the featured back position when Carl Sanders went down with a season-ending knee injury in the second game. Foster came through with a team-best 737 yards, which included three 100-yard games. Percy Coleman won the fullback job during the final three games of the season and picked up an additional 186 yards on only 29 carries.

Defensively, the Blazer who receives the most attention from opponents is inside linebacker Brian Smith, who set a school single-season record last year with 114 tackles. But Smith is given free shots at opposing ball carriers, thanks to the strong play of UAB's front three. At end, Reginald King and James Lewis share time with Sterrick Morgan and Wallace Rutledge. Those four, along with nosetackle Pernell Davis, gave up less than 200 yards per game on the ground last season.

But Brown wants his defensive players to spend more time this season making more plays in their opponents' backfield. UAB recorded just 16 sacks a year ago, and Brown spent a great deal of time this spring addressing the Blazers' need to put pressure on opposing quarterbacks.

The Blazers need a better pass rush because their sec-

ondary isn't as experienced. UAB's top two tacklers from last season, free safety Alan Willis and strong safety Izell Reese, are gone, and the only returning starter in the secondary is cornerback Rodregis Brooks, who picked off three passes last year.



California 1997 Record: 3-8

Nebraska's third foe this fall — California on Sept. 12 — has its sights set on going to a bowl game, and coach Tom Holmoe believes he has the defense to get the Bears to that point.

Defense dominated the Bears' intrasquad spring game with a combined 10 sacks in a 65-play scrimmage, and Holmoe is pleased with how his team progressed during the four-week practice period.

"Our defense is starting to meld as a unit and that's a great sign for this football team," he said. "We're not anywhere near where we want to be when we start the season, but there are a lot of elements in place. Our defensive line is doing some great things and we have great depth there."

The Bears have nine defensive starters back from last season, and 19 of their top 24 defensive lettermen return. Cal is the strongest up front, where three starters are back from 1997.

Defensive end Andre Carter returns for his sophomore season. He moved into the starting lineup midway through last season and finished fifth on the team in tackles for loss. Mawuko Tugbenyoh and John McLaughlin will share duty at the other end position. Tugbenyoh had five sacks last season and returned two fumbles for touchdowns. Jeremiah Parker can make big plays at either end or tackle.

"We expect to win," Holmoe said. "We expect to go to a bowl game. We expect to be in the race for the league title

Southpaw Justin Vedder returns for his senior season after enjoying the most prolific debut season by a quarterback in Cal history, throwing for 2,718 yards and 20 touchdowns in '97.



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heading down the stretch run. If that expectation puts pressure on us, so be it. It's time to step up and be counted, and I think our team has accepted that challenge."

But Cal's defense will be run by coordinator Lyle Setencich, who was on the defensive coaching staff at Arizona State in 1996 when the Sun Devils shut out Nebraska, 19-0, during the regular season.

The Bears' West Coast offense is led by quarterback Justin Vedder, who threw for 2,718 yards and 20 touchdowns last season. Vedder ranked 22nd nationally in total offense (249.4 yards per game) and was the third-best passing quarterback in the Pac-10.

Cal's running attack will come mainly in the form of sophomore Marcus Fields. Fields gained 419 yards and scored five times as a true freshman.

The Bears opened the season with two straight victories last year — then things started to go wrong. Cal won just once in its final nine games and narrowly avoided finishing in the Pac-10 cellar. That kind of season won't be tolerated this year, Holmoe said.

It might be difficult for the Golden Bears to avert another losing season, however. After playing Nebraska, Holmoe's team must travel to Norman to face an improved Oklahoma Sooners squad. Cal also is scheduled to face potential top-10 teams in Arizona State and UCLA.



**Washington
 1997 Record: 8-4**

This won't be the same experienced, talented group of Huskies who battled Nebraska early last season in a game that carried national championship consequences. That's not to say this Washington team will be less explosive.

In fact, Washington's passing attack may be even better, thanks to the return of junior Brock Huard.

Huard threw for 2,140 yards and needs just another 1,875 to pass his older brother, Damon, as the all-time leading passer in Husky history. The younger Huard already is Washington's leader in career touchdown passes with 36.

"Brock is an excellent player at quarterback," Husky coach Jim

Lambright said. "He really takes control of the team. As a passer, he can put a nice touch on a short route or throw the deep ball accurately."

Huard isn't the only top-notch quarterback at Washington. When Huard went down with an ankle injury against Nebraska, his backup, Marques Tuiasosopo, threw for 270 yards and kept the Huskies close.

Finding someone to throw to may be more difficult this season. The Huskies return just four players who caught a pass last season, but the team has some young players ready to step in. Ja'Warren Hooker is one such player. As a freshman, Hooker touched the ball only eight times, but he scored on four of those plays. He has blinding speed — he won the 55-meter dash at

Frank Ragsdale



A sprained ankle kept Washington quarterback Brock Huard from finishing last year's 27-14 loss to Nebraska in Seattle.

the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships.

Linebackers Lester Towns and Marques Hairston are back to lead the Huskies' on defense. Towns led Washington with 89 tackles from his inside linebacker position.

Mac Tuiaea and Jabari Issa are back on Washington's defensive front, which held seven of its 12 foes to fewer than 100 yards rushing.

Washington will be battle-ready when it plays Nebraska. The Huskies open the season at Arizona State and then face Brigham Young before traveling to Lincoln to face the Huskers. ■

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Coach **Rhonda Revelle's** Husker softball team continued its momentum after winning the Big 12 championship by sweeping three games in the NCAA regional tournament in Lincoln to advance to the College World Series for the first time since 1988 and the sixth time in school history.

The Huskers went 16-0 in Big 12 play, then won the conference tournament at Oklahoma City with four shutouts pitched by **Jenny Voss**. The sophomore from Ankeny, Iowa, led the nation with 39 victories prior to the CWS and she recorded 11 shutouts in her final 31 games.

Voss, who was named MVP of the Big 12 Tournament, pitched 49 2/3 consecutive shutout innings before allowing a run in the NCAA regional final against Oregon.

Swinging For History

On May 20, Voss and shortstop **Ali Viola** became the first Nebraska softball teammates to be named first-team All-America. Viola also made Nebraska softball history by becoming the first player to be named to three All-America teams in her career.

Viola led the Big 12 and ranked third in the nation with a school-record 21 home runs entering College World Series play. She also led the Huskers with a .420 batting average and had a school-record slugging percentage of .864.

Christie McCoy, a senior from San Mateo, Calif., hit 17 home runs, including eight in 17 games at home. In a mid-April victory against Missouri, she broke a school record by hitting three home runs, something only eight other players in NCAA history have done.

With Viola and McCoy leading the way, the Huskers set a school single-season record for home runs with 61, shattering the previous mark of 45 set by the 1995 team. The 61 home runs was the fourth-highest season total in NCAA history. The Huskers blasted 24 home runs in an impressive 16-game stretch prior to the CWS.

Interest in Husker softball was reflected in attendance for the NCAA regional at the Nebraska Softball Complex. The Huskers' three games drew a combined 5,118 fans and attendance for Nebraska's 1-0 victory against Iowa drew a Complex record 2,076 fans.

Revelle, who was named the Big 12 Coach of the Year, became the winningest coach in Husker softball history in 1998, surpassing **Ron Wolforth**, who guided Nebraska to 188 victories from 1987 to 1992. Revelle coached her 200th victory on May 2, a 1-0 victory against No. 8-ranked Texas in the Huskers' third game of the Big 12 Tournament.

Revelle and current assistant **Lori Sippel** both played for the Huskers in the College World Series. Revelle was a member of Nebraska's first CWS team in 1982, and Sippel made three trips to the CWS in 1985, 1987 and 1988.

Nebraska's best finish in the CWS came in 1985, when the Huskers lost in the final game to UCLA to finish in second place. ■



Jon Waller

Snubbed by the WNBA, Anna DeForge is taking her talents to the San Jose Lasers of the ABL.

Ex-Huskers Know The Way To San Jose

Former Huskers **Anna DeForge** and **LaToya Doage** were selected in the American Basketball League draft by the San Jose Lasers, who are coached by **Angela Beck**. DeForge, who was passed over in the Women's National Basketball Association draft, was a second-round pick by the Lasers.

Doage, a third-round selection who completed her eligibility in 1997, and DeForge will become the first former Huskers to play professionally in the United States if they make the Lasers.

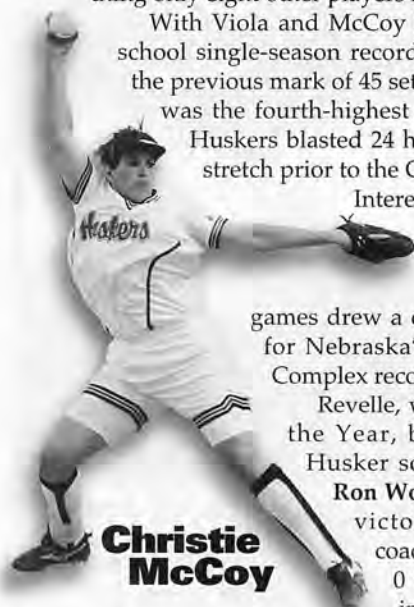
Nebraska's leading scorer (18.5) and rebounder (7.9) for coach **Paul Sanderford's** first team at Nebraska, DeForge had been projected as a second-round pick in the WNBA.

Sanderford must find replacements for DeForge and Nebraska's four other seniors after a season that ended with a 23-10 record and a first-round victory in the NCAA Tournament.

"I'm looking to continue to build on what we established this year," Sanderford told the *Lincoln Journal Star*. "We made some giant strides. Women's basketball has never received the exposure in this state that it has received this year. This year's team set a high standard, a very high standard."

"But," he added, "my goals will be higher (in 1998-99)."

Despite losing five seniors, Sanderford does return several experienced players, and he will welcome four talented recruits who could play immediately when they arrive this fall. ■



Christie McCoy

Fast Track To Success

The Nebraska men's track and field team completed the conference two-step after winning the title at the Big 12 Outdoor Championships in Columbia, Mo. The Huskers also captured the Big 12 indoor title in February. Five Huskers won titles in Columbia: **Chris Wright**, long jump; **Joe Erdkamp**, hammer throw; **Jack Melson**, shot put; **Byron Topps**, 100 meters; and **Aaron Henrichs**, decathlon.

Wright, a senior from Nassau, Bahamas, also won the long jump at the conference indoor meet.

The Husker women's team finished second to Texas in the Big 12 Outdoor Championships. Senior **Tressa Thompson**, who didn't compete during the indoor season, won her third consecutive conference title in the shot put and added the discus title to her trophy case. Sophomore **Dalhia Ingram** won the long jump with a personal-best 21-4.

Thompson, an eight-time All-American and six-time conference champion, was to defend her NCAA outdoor title in the shot put at the national meet at Buffalo, N.Y., June 3-6. ■

Coach Gary Pepin, shown here with former Husker All-American Angee Henry, guided the men's track squad to its third conference outdoor title in four years.



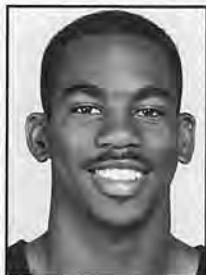
University of Nebraska

Williams Leaves Hoops Squad

Freshman guard **Rodney Williams** announced that he plans to transfer to another school for the 1998-99 season.

Williams, a 6-foot-3 guard from Houston, saw limited action during his first season at Nebraska. He played a total of 39 minutes in seven games in 1997-98 for coach **Danny Nee's** squad.

"In talking with Rodney, he felt that it was in his best interest to continue his basketball career at a community or junior college next season," Nee said. "He thinks he'll have a better chance of getting more time on the court at a smaller school." ■



RECRUITING NEWS

PERRY OUT, HOLMES IN

Nebraska men's basketball coach **Danny Nee** completed his recruiting by signing **Joe Holmes**, a 5-foot-11 point guard from Tyler (Texas) Junior College in late April. Holmes, who was a Tyler teammate of Cornhusker recruit Rodney Fields, averaged 10.4 points and 7.9 assists for Tyler last year. He filled the scholarship that had been committed to **Lamont Perry**.

A 6-3 point guard from Southwestern College in California, Perry had indicated that he planned to sign a letter-of-intent with Nebraska but, due to curious circumstances, never did.

When Perry's signed letter-of-intent failed to arrive in the mail, Nee looked elsewhere, and Perry subsequently announced his plans to sign with Fairleigh-Dickinson.

WOMEN HOOPSTERS ADD JUCO ALL-AMERICAN

After signing guard **Karsen Muller** from Littleton, Colo., in the early-signing period, the Nebraska women's basketball team added three players in the spring: swing players **Candace Blackbird** from South Sioux City, Neb., and **Jennifer Jaracz** from Crestwood, Ky.; and forward **Monique Whitfield** from Long Beach, Calif., by way of Central Arizona Community College.

Whitfield was a first-team All-American at Central Arizona, where she led the Vaqueras to a 33-1 record and NJCAA national championship in 1997-98.

JUCO STANDOUT SIGNS WITH HUSKER WRESTLERS

The Husker wrestling team received a commitment from Moorpark (Calif.) Community College wrestler **Ati Conner**, who was the California state junior college champion this year.

Nebraska wrestling coach **Tim Neumann** said that Conner was the perfect addition to his squad.

"Ati Conner is the best 165-pounder in the nation coming out at any level," Neumann said. "Everybody in the nation was after him, and he chose to sign with us. He fills the biggest need we had in our lineup, and I think he is going to be able to make an immediate impact and challenge for All-America honors next year."

Conner joins a recruiting class that includes 141-pounder **Justin Flores** of Temecula, Calif., 149-pounder **David Miller** of Kearney, Neb., and 197-pounder **Justin Ruiz** of Murray, Utah.

SOCCER STANDOUT JOINS HUSKERS

Najah Williams, a midfielder from Phoenix, Ariz., became the sixth recruit to be signed by Nebraska women's soccer coach **John Walker**.

"Najah Williams is a great late addition to our recruiting class," Walker said. "She is probably one of the most athletic players in the nation coming out of high school."

Williams, who is expected to contribute immediately, led Xavier College Prep to three Arizona state titles in 1995, 1996 and 1997. She chose to attend Nebraska over UCLA, San Diego State Southern Cal and Creighton.

BRIEFLY NOTED

- The Dallas Mavericks and Chicago Bulls will play an NBA exhibition game at the Bob Devaney Sports Center on Oct. 22. The game will feature the return of former Nebraska guard **Erick Strickland**, who is now with the Mavericks, to Lincoln.

- Robert Burton** was named the associate athletic director for sports administration. He will be responsible for the administration and supervision of 19 of Nebraska's 23 varsity sports.

- For the second straight year, **Tyronn Lue** has been named winner of the Jack Moore Award, given annually to the most valuable player on the Nebraska basketball team. Lue joins **Dave Hoppen** (1985, 1986) and **Eric Piatkowski** (1993, 1994) as the only Nebraska players to win the award twice. ■



Tyronn Lue

First Impressions

In his inaugural season as Nebraska's head baseball coach, Dave Van Horn wasn't able to lead his team into the Big 12 Tournament, but he did get the Huskers pointed in the right direction

First-year coach **Dave Van Horn** and the Nebraska baseball team ended its season by defeating Iowa State in its final two games, 13-8 and 15-8, to finish with a 24-20 record.

The Huskers finished seventh in the Big 12 with a 10-13 mark, barely missing a spot in the six-team conference tournament.

Sophomore **Ken Harvey**, who batted .388 to finish as the Huskers' second-leading hitter in 1997, was Nebraska's leading hitter this season with a .373 average. Harvey was second on the team in slugging percentage (.613) and RBIs (39).

Freshman **Danny Kimura** batted .340 and led the team in doubles (15) and RBIs (41). He also tied **Jeff Hedman** with a team-leading eight home runs. Hedman, a junior college transfer from Salt Lake City, led the Huskers with an impressive slugging percentage of .623.

The Nebraska pitching staff was led by **Jay Sirianni**, who finished the season with a 5-4 record. The junior left-hander

pitched one complete game and struck out 44 hitters in 56 2/3 innings. Senior **Matt Schuldt**, a transfer from Baylor, was another solid performer on the mound, finishing with a 4-2 record and a 3.13 ERA.

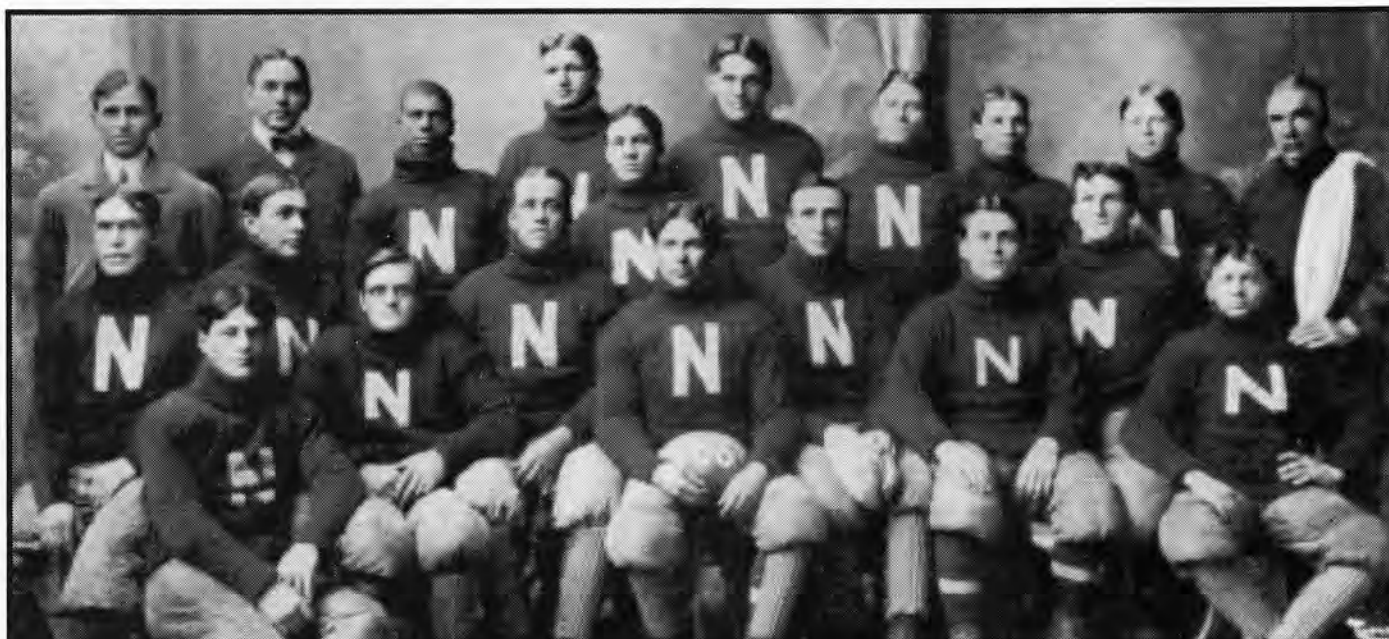
One fact that can't be overlooked is the remarkable turnaround the Huskers made over last season. Nebraska won just seven of 23 Big 12 games in 1997 for a winning percentage of .233. This season that number jumped to .435.

Van Horn led Nebraska to its first winning season since 1995, and with several key players returning, the improvement should continue in 1999.

"We've got some good players coming in next season who are ready to find their roles," Van Horn said. "If we can get some pitchers in here that can throw with good command, we'll be a good team (next season)." ■

"If we can get some pitchers in here that can throw with good command, we'll be a good team (next season)."

Dave Van Horn



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For Husker Fans, It's "Must See QB"

Forget all the season-ending television shows that grabbed America by the throat in May; it was a quarterback race that had Nebraska tuned in

Bobby Newcombe's emergence as Nebraska's No. 1 quarterback in spring practice was front page news, with a photo, in the *Lincoln Journal Star*. The headline said: "Who's No. 1? Bobby."

Already, Newcombe is recognizable by his first name.

The other story above the fold in the newspaper's April 29 edition was headlined: "Senate panel told of abuses by IRS." A photo with that story was of Nebraska Senator Bob Kerrey.

The *Omaha World-Herald* was only slightly less enthusiastic in its coverage of coach Frank Solich's announcement that Newcombe had earned the No. 1 spot on the post-spring depth chart, carrying a reference to Newcombe's emergence on the front page and two stories on the sports page.

Eric Crouch, the No. 2 quarterback, was the subject of one of the stories, a column comparing him to the late Brook Berringer, who labored in Tommie Frazier's shadow.

The naming of the No. 1 quarterback received comparable coverage by the electronic media. A dozen or so reporters showed up at the South Stadium varsity lounge for a news conference, which wasn't exactly a news conference (there was no formal seating or agenda), involving Solich, Newcombe and quarterbacks coach Turner Gill.

Solich, who had to answer the same questions twice, explained, almost apologetically. "I guess this may be a little inconvenient for you the way it's set up. But I didn't feel comfortable with just a normal press conference because really what we're doing is releasing the entire depth chart," he said.

"I know that most of the attention is centered on the quarterback position. But I did not feel comfortable calling a

normal press conference to announce that. It probably would be just better to do it with this format."



Mike Babcock

The news conference that wasn't provided insight into at least two things: Interest in Cornhusker football has never been higher. And those who wonder about Solich's ability to handle the pressure of following Osborne need not concern themselves too much.

Solich's decision to accommodate reporters without the formality of a traditional news conference underscored his wisdom. He didn't act as if he were inconvenienced, patiently repeating himself when he just as easily could have addressed the reporters'

interested enough to bother getting a comment from then-coach Tom Osborne.

"It's not surprising that there's this kind of interest in knowing who the quarterback will be," Solich said.

He was asked if he had been intrigued by the situation.

"It just seemed like a coaching decision to me," he replied.

"It affects a lot of people. I know, certainly, it affects the three guys who were contending for the No. 1 spot. It affects this ballclub. It affects this coaching staff. But you know, so do all the other choices you make at all the other positions. Those are as important to what we get done here."

Later, he clarified his observation, explaining his choice of words.

"In stating that it was just another coaching decision, in some ways it was that," he said. "When you look at the quality of the people at the position, it adds up to more than that. But in the long run, decisions have had to be made, really, at every position. I guess that's what I was getting at."

"I've faced this before as an assistant."

Solich had never faced the situation as a head coach, however, and his inclination might have been to downplay it because of the youth of those involved.

Newcombe, who won't celebrate his 19th birthday until the start of two-a-day practices in the fall, and Crouch have only been in Lincoln for a year.

Turner Gill, who shouldered the considerable burden of fan expectations as a young quarterback at Nebraska, shared Solich's confidence in those he coaches. He has talked with them about dealing with the potentially overwhelming attention.

If they do as Gill says, the front-page stories under banner headlines will follow.

Because such is the appeal of Cornhusker football. ■



Newcombe's switch from wingback to quarterback in the spring added to the already thick drama surrounding the signal-caller race.

questions once, or not at all.

Their interest was appreciated. "The fact Nebraska football seems to be important to a lot of people in this state, and really a lot of fans around the country, I think that's tremendous," he said.

When the post-spring depth chart was released a year ago, only the Lincoln and Omaha newspapers were

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